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ON THE COVER

Thanks to blogs and other new avenues of communication, the military and its supporters no longer depend on the mainstream media to tell their stories. *Story on Page 22.* M. Glenwood

The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.5 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 14,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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Indianapolis, IN 46207
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NEW YORK (212) 588-9200
DETROIT (248) 530-0300
CHICAGO (312) 236-4900
LOS ANGELES (213) 624-0900

Copyright 2010 by The American Legion

The American Legion (ISSN 0886-1234) is published monthly by The American Legion, 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, IN 46216. Periodicals postage paid at Indianapolis, IN 46204 and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The American Legion, Data Services, P.O. Box 1954, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

Canada Post International Publications Mail *(Canadian Distribution)* Sales Agreement No. PM40063731. Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: Station A, P.O. Box, Windsor ON N9A 6J5. Re-entered second-class mail matter at Manila Central Post Office dated Dec. 22, 1991.

Printed in USA
Member Audit Bureau of Circulations

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WEB SITE www.legion.org

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Post-sponsored and widows: $6
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'The Secretary's War on Homelessness'

I read James V. Carroll's article (August) with great interest, because I lived homeless on the streets – actually, the alleys – of Albuquerque, N.M., and Las Vegas in 2007. I was a 61-year-old Vietnam vet with two sport bags of clothes, a sleeping bag, a pillow, toiletries, a laptop computer and a motorcycle. I retired with a respectable nest egg from a Fortune 100 company in 2004. I invested in a bricks-and-mortar retail business that did pretty well until the housing market began to implode in our area in mid-2006. I had to liquidate everything to pay creditors and taxes. I was left with $200, the motorcycle and sparse personal possessions. A camper and cargo trailer were sold cheap to raise cash to live while I sought employment. I was offered commission sales jobs, but retail sales were beginning to severely curtail. I found myself living out of the camper and in a cardboard box next to a dumpster near the "slave market," selling blood plasma.

Carroll's article, and the sidebar by Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman, imply that veteran homelessness is unsolvable, and that a contributing factor is that many of us want to be homeless. I take exception to that implication. This episode taught me that anyone can experience misfortune and its attendant challenges. There is no shame in poverty or homelessness. Most of the people I met during this time were desperately trying to improve their circumstances by virtue of their own efforts, and had a high degree of pride and self-respect. There are people who are facing mental, emotional and other challenges, but that doesn't render them expendable. Walk a mile in my moccasins before you judge me.

– Stephen Vaile, Shelby, Mont.

I served this country with honor. I saw, and put, humans in body bags. I dealt with death and suffering for 18 hours a day for about four years straight.

Later, I used McDonald's bathrooms to stay clean. I nearly froze to death living in a van for two years. Thankfully, I could panhandle to get enough to keep tags and cheap insurance on the van.

American veterans who fall into the cracks are the forgotten heroes of our nation. We were used by the military, then thrown out like dirty bathwater.

– Paul A. Halsema, Glenmoore, Pa.

Many vets, rather than being discharged outright, should be remanded to a VA hospital where they can "decompress." I was separated in San Diego and woke up on a street corner in San Francisco about a week later, with a strange form of amnesia that had taken almost all of my 20 years. I believe it might have been the end result of a complete nervous breakdown. I wouldn't regain some of my memory until 1992.

I can relate to the homeless vets. I was in Frisco, lost and alone at 21, while my home was in Massachusetts. I know I was pushed beyond the breaking point during my service, and I should have been remanded to a VA psych ward.

– Will Fontaine, Attleboro, Mass.

Every year, the government tries to close obsolete military bases, but politicians in those districts won't let them. Turn them into retraining bases. They

have housing, medical facilities, even land for expansion. Many of our homeless are veterans, so they would feel right at home. This would be relatively inexpensive, because they would take care of the base and even set up light manufacturing. Once they developed new skills, they could melt back into society.

– Larry J. Tracy, Sarasota, Fla.

'What Would Ike Do?'

I enjoyed the fine article by Richard Striner (August). Unfortunately, we do not today seem to have leaders with President Eisenhower's wisdom. I can't conceive of him agreeing with our free-trade policies of the past 30 years, which have shifted manufacturing and R&D to foreign nations to the detriment of our own. The trade deficits are our hidden debt. I believe Eisenhower understood that economic strength is necessary for military strength.

– John W. Stafford, Phoenix

Display of the U.S. flag

The Commander's Message (August) stated that Col. Barfoot's homeowners association ordered him to stop flying his flag. In fact, it ordered him to remove the flagpole he had installed in his yard, after the board of directors specifically denied his request to do so. He could have flown his flag from the side of his home, as many of his neighbors do. Instead, he defied the HOA board, even though he agreed to abide by the HOA rules when he purchased his home. The dispute was not about the flag, but the flagpole.

As a former Navy officer, I proudly fly the flag from my home. And as an HOA board member, I understand that installing a flagpole in my yard would violate our rules and seriously damage the aesthetics of our community, negatively impacting property values.

– Bill Bradow, Oviedo, Fla.

'Agent Orange Debate Brews on Hill'

Thank you for your timely article by Tom Philpott (Veterans Update, August). I was infuriated by Sen. James Webb's comment that the new presumptive diseases "occur normally with aging." My husband lost his right to normal aging when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and had a heart attack in his early 40s. He has lost his right to old age, as he will never live to see it. Sixty days for the Senate and Congress to ask questions can be a lifetime for my Vietnam vet. Keep up the good work fighting on his behalf.

– Deborah Mack, Austell, Ga.

I am a World War II veteran. My son, a Vietnam veteran, was unable to re-up because he "pretended" to be having "fainting" spells. He came home upset, ill and unable to work. By the time he was correctly diagnosed, it was too late. He had a brain tumor, caused by Agent Orange. He died three months later at 56, five years ago. The powers that be are going to win soon. All of the ill veterans will be dead, and then they will be able to admit the truth.

– Virtha L. Padgett, Coffeyville, Kan.

'Generally Speaking'

I read with interest Alan Dowd's article on Gen. Stanley McChrystal (Rapid Fire, August). When a soldier gets to his level, he doesn't do anything recklessly. He has a plan that will create the outcome he wants, and he executes it. The present administration has set up rules of engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan that can cost lives because of hesitation to act, caused by a need to be politically correct. We made mistakes like this in Vietnam, where zones of action were defined for U.S. troops but not for the enemy, and the enemy knew it. The lives of our soldiers should always come first, and cannot be limited by political rules established by those not on the ground. McChrystal didn't resign in order to send a message to the American people that they need to take a closer look at how the war is being run and where it is going.

– Bill Luckenbill, Doylestown, Pa.

I was extremely disappointed that this article seemed to justify insubordination among four-star generals. "To say such things privately is one thing" seems to indicate that it would have been fine for McChrystal to bad-mouth his commanders, as long as *Rolling Stone* was not present. His first mistake was neither letting *Rolling Stone* get so close nor letting his guard down, but being insubordinate to his commanding officers at all, regardless of his personal politics.

– Dana Billotte Frierson, Antioch, Tenn.

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The DISCLOSE Act, passed by the House on June 24, has three important components to ensure that the voices of American voters are not drowned out by a flood of secret special-interest money that threatens our democracy.

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The DISCLOSE Act also bars large federal contractors and banks who received bailout funds, such as AIG, from recycling taxpayer money into campaign expenditures. They should not use taxpayer money on ads to reward politicians who favor them with federal contracts.

Finally, the bill requires unprecedented disclosure from special interests that spend money to influence voters. No longer will they be able to hide behind sham organizations with nice-sounding names, while refusing to disclose who is bankrolling the ads. Give voters that information and let them judge.

Any group has the right to say whatever it wants about a candidate, but we must ensure that voters know who is funding these TV ads. In order to make informed decisions in elections, voters must know whether an ad attacking a candidate for supporting reform is funded by a special interest that opposes it.

The vast majority of Americans support the provisions of the DISCLOSE Act. The bill will shine a bright light on groups seeking to influence elections while lurking in the shadows. It's simple: if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

The DISCLOSE Act is hailed by supporters as reducing corporate and foreign influence over U.S. elections. Critics say the bill impinges on free speech and gives privileged status to unions.

There are times when members of Congress need to be reminded that the very freedoms that define this great country are not ours to deny or grant, but only to protect. This is one of those times. The DISCLOSE Act is a blatant attempt by Democratic leaders to auction off First Amendment rights to certain special-interest organizations poised to spend millions this November protecting Democratic incumbents, while using costly, cumbersome restrictions to stifle the speech of their political opponents.

The only thing bipartisan about this bill is its opposition, with 36 Democrats and over 450 U.S. organizations joining Republicans in opposing it.

The DISCLOSE Act outright bans political speech by U.S. companies with government contracts and minority foreign ownership, but not by unions that directly negotiate labor contracts with the government, or by unions with foreign members. It requires most organizations, but not labor unions, to report large transfers between affiliates. The legislation also forces costly reporting requirements on new organizations with fewer than 500,000 members, but exempts larger ones over 10 years old. It allows large organizations funded by members from every state to spend undisclosed amounts on political speech while restricting the speech of regional or state organizations.

Proponents of this initiative regularly point to public-opinion polls supporting increased disclosure, and we all support increased transparency. Unfortunately, this bill isn't about disclosure, but about the government trying to dictate who should be allowed to exercise their right to free speech.

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Exercise, along with dieting, has an important role in weight loss. Burn off more calories than you take in – called negative energy balance – and you will lose weight. When it comes to weight loss, exercise may be more important in terms of achieving energy balance. According to the National Weight Control Registry, the key factor for almost all those who have lost weight and kept it off is that they continued to exercise.

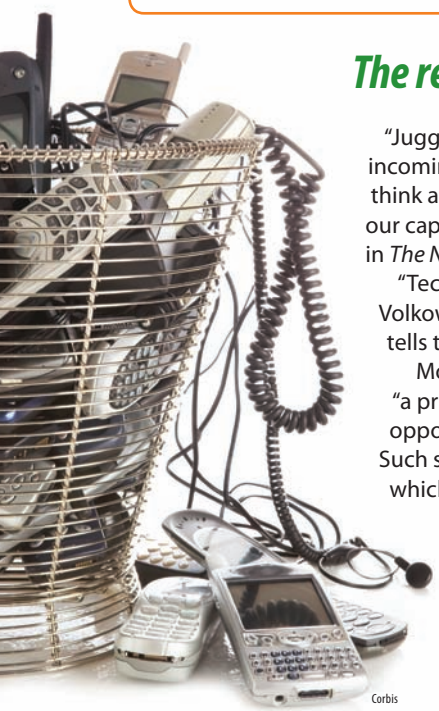
"I think most people know they should be more active, but many do not know how much to do or how to work it into their daily lives," says American College of Sports Medicine President Dr. James Pivarnik. He supports the U.S. National Physical Activity Plan, announced last spring by a coalition of 20 partners from the public and private sectors, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the YMCA and the American Association of Retired People.

Not many of us follow the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, which recommend that adults get 150 minutes of moderate exercise, or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise, each week. All activity counts as energy expenditure in the new plan, including simply taking the stairs rather than the escalator. Ten-minute bouts of activity count toward your daily exercise total.

The plan also points out that you're never too old to begin a physical-activity program. In general, you do not need a doctor's clearance to start moderate-intensity physical activity. If you have a chronic disease, such as heart disease or diabetes, ask your doctor for advice before beginning an exercise program to determine the right kind and amount of exercise for you.

People who have a positive attitude about exercise tend to have healthier, more active lifestyles. Simple acts, such as parking in the first available spot rather than searching for one closer to the store, encourage you to be more active. Little things that you don't even think about can help you burn extra calories.

continued on page **12**



Corbis

The rewiring of our brains

"Juggling e-mail, phone calls and other incoming information can change how people think and behave," ultimately undermining our capacity to focus, according to a report in *The New York Times*.

"Technology is rewiring our brains," Nora Volkow of the National Institute of Drug Abuse tells the *Times*.

Modern gadgetry actually triggers "a primitive impulse to respond to immediate opportunities and threats," the report claims. Such stimulation triggers "a dopamine squirt," which becomes addictive and can have several negative health consequences. For example:

- Technology multitaskers have trouble focusing and "shutting out irrelevant information."
- Digital stimulation contributes to attention problems in children.
- Technology distractions caused by cell phones, smart phones and PDAs have triggered car accidents and train derailments.
- A University of California study concludes that e-mail interruptions significantly increase stress. These "stress hormones" actually reduce short-term memory.

By consuming 12 hours of media daily, up from just five hours in 1960, "we're exposing our brains to an environment and asking them to do things we weren't necessarily evolved to do," says University of California neuroscientist Adam Gazzaley.

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

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Bob Vila ranks new 2011 EdenPURE® portable heater #1 in North America

U.S. designed and engineered GEN4 uses new Sylvania heat source and EdenFLOW™ direct air technology

Accept no imitations - portable heaters and fireplaces "dry out" the air with inefficient ceramic heating elements

Bob Vila, America's Favorite Home Improvement Expert, Canton, Ohio

I know why millions of Americans are saving on their heating bills with the EdenPURE® Infrared Portable Heater.

And now you can save up to $102 on the new 2011 EdenPURE® GEN4, the finest portable heater in the world.

The new GEN4 was designed and engineered in the USA and has several patented technological breakthroughs to save you money on your heating bill.

U.S. engineers combined specially designed Sylvania Infrared Bulbs with the existing EdenPURE® copper heating chambers for more efficient heating. They even redesigned the air flow, resulting in amplified heating performance. The designers at EdenPURE® call this their "EdenFLOW™ Direct Air" technology.

For over 30 years as your home improvement television host, I have reviewed and experienced thousands of products. I have an EdenPURE® in my Massachusetts home and found it to be a very safe and reliable source of portable heat. This is one of those few comfort investments I can recommend for your home that will truly pay dividends.

We all know heating costs are expected to remain at record levels. The cost of heating our homes will continue to be a significant burden on the family budget. The EdenPURE® GEN4 can cut your heating bills, pay for itself in a matter of weeks, and then start putting a great deal of extra money in your pocket after that.

With over one million satisfied customers around the world, the new EdenPURE® heats better, faster, saves more on heating bills, and runs almost silent.

A major cause of residential fires in the United States is portable heaters. The choice of fire and safety professionals everywhere, the EdenPURE® has no exposed heating elements that can cause a fire.

The outside of the EdenPURE® only gets warm to the touch so that it will not burn children or pets. And your pet may be just like my dog who has reserved a favorite spot near the EdenPURE®.

The EdenPURE® can also help you feel better. Unlike EdenPURE® imitators, it will not reduce humidity or oxygen in the room. These imitators use ceramic plates instead of our patented copper. The EdenPURE® GEN4 has over 1 pound of copper! Cheap ceramic plates reduce humidity, dry out your sinuses and make your skin dry. With other heating sources, you'll notice that you get sleepy when the heat comes on because they are burning up oxygen.

The advanced space-age EdenPURE® GEN4 also heats the room evenly, wall to wall and floor to ceiling. Other heating sources heat rooms unevenly with most of the heat concentrated high and to the center of the room. And as you know, portable heaters only heat an area a few feet around the heater. With the EdenPURE®, the temperature will not vary in any part of the room.

Photos using infrared lighting demonstrated that the heat was almost perfectly even from floor to ceiling and wall to wall. The EdenPURE® advanced infrared efficiency is based on the distribution of energized air, not on just fan movement. This heat is called "soft heat" due to how comfortable it is.

How can a person cut their heating bill with the EdenPURE®? First, the EdenPURE® uses less energy to create heat than many other sources, but that is just part of why it will cut a person's heating bill. The EdenPURE® will heat a room in minutes. You will immediately notice the difference! Therefore, you can turn the heat down in your house to as low as 50 degrees, but the room you are occupying, which has the EdenPURE®, will be warm and comfortable.

Your EdenPURE® GEN4 Portable easily rolls from room to room. Using zone heating keeps you comfortable and reduces your heating bills. This can drastically cut heating bills; in some instances, the savings may be substantial.

The EdenPURE® will pay for itself in weeks. It will keep a great deal of extra money in a user's pocket. Because of today's spiraling gas, oil, propane, and other energy costs, the EdenPURE® will provide even greater savings as time goes by.

With no increase in price, the new EdenPURE® GEN4 has been updated with the latest technology, safety, and comfort features to provide you with even greater comfort, more savings, and years of reliability.

The EdenPURE® GEN4 Portable Heater comes with a comprehensive five year warranty and a 60-day, no questions asked, satisfaction guarantee – EdenPURE® will even pay for the return shipping. There is absolutely no risk. And EdenPURE® is the only portable heater with a National Service Network.

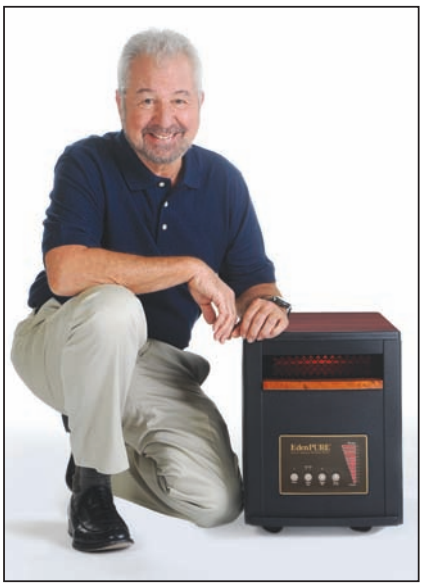
How to order:

There are two models to choose from: the new U.S. engineered GEN4 or our Personal Heater. The GEN4 comfortably heats an area up to 1,000 square feet while the Personal Heater covers up to 300 square feet.

During our special, you are eligible for a $75 DISCOUNT PLUS FREE SHIPPING AND HANDLING FOR A TOTAL SAVINGS OF UP TO $102 on the EdenPURE® GEN4. And now you can save an additional $100 on new Personal Heaters for a total savings of $192. This special offer expires in 10 days. If you order after that, we reserve the right to either accept or reject order requests at the discounted price. See my attached Authorized Discount Coupon to take advantage of this savings opportunity.

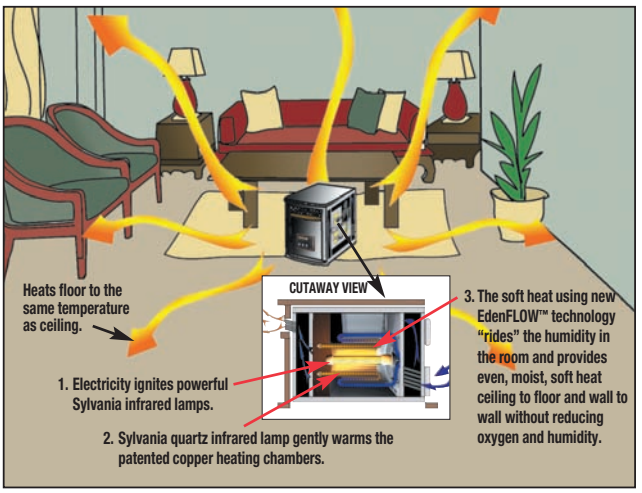
The EdenPURE® carries a 60-day unconditional, no-risk guarantee. If you are not totally satisfied, return it at our expense and your purchase price will be refunded. No questions asked. There is also a 5-year warranty on all parts and labor for the GEN4 and a 3-year warranty for the Personal Heater.

Never be cold again



Firemen and safety professionals choose EdenPURE®. We all read about space heaters and the danger of fire. The EdenPURE® has no exposed heating elements that can cause a fire. And your pet may be just like my dog that has reserved a favorite spot near the EdenPURE®. – *Bob Vila*

How it works:



BOB VILA'S AUTHORIZED DISCOUNT COUPON

The price of the EdenPURE® GEN4 is $472 plus $27 shipping and handling and $372 plus $17 shipping and handling for the Personal Heater, but, with this Authorized Discount Coupon, you will receive a $75 discount, free shipping and handling and be able to get the EdenPURE® GEN4 for only $397 delivered and the Personal Heater for only $197 delivered. After 10 days we reserve the right to either accept or reject order requests at the discounted price.

Check below which model and number you want:

☐ GEN4 Heater, number ____ ☐ Personal Heater, number ____

☐ I am ordering within 10 days, therefore I get a $75 discount, free shipping and handling and my price is only $397 for GEN4 Heater delivered.

☐ I am ordering within 10 days, therefore I get a $175 discount, free shipping and handling and my price is only $197 for the Personal Heater delivered.

☐ I am ordering past 10 days, therefore I pay full price of $472 plus $27 shipping & handling for GEN4 Heater and $372 plus $17 shipping & handling for the Personal Heater.

- To claim your discount or by phone: call **toll-free 1-800-630-8983**. Operators are on duty Monday - Friday 6am - 3am, Saturday 7am - 12am and Sunday 7am - 11pm, EST. Give operator your Authorization Code on this coupon.
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Canton, OH 44767

continued from page **10**

Some encouraging news about exercise and weight loss comes from a new study by Harvard University researchers. They looked at the weight-change histories of more than 34,000 women who had participated in a health study. The women who were not quite overweight but exercised moderately – walked briskly, bicycled leisurely, ballroom-danced or played with children – for an hour almost every day came close to maintaining their body size 13 years later. Just 30 minutes of more vigorous activity, such as jogging or fast biking, also prevented them from gaining weight.

One problem with exercising vigorously to lose weight is that people tend to consume more calories afterward. But low-intensity activity may allow you to expend calories without triggering the desire to compensate by eating more.

If you exercise moderately, such as walking briskly for 30 to 60 minutes a day, you can burn several hundred calories. That's enough to prevent weight gain – and if you do it regularly, you can even lose weight.

You may not lose weight through exercise immediately. If you are new to regular exercise or are overweight, the amount of activity you can perform may be limited. Weight management is a long-term goal. Gradually increase the amount you exercise over time as your fitness improves. You'll literally see the results as you shed the pounds.

Walk every day, lose 17 pounds a year

The key to weight loss is burning more calories than you consume. If you add 30 minutes of brisk walking to your daily routine, you could lose 17 pounds in a year. Here's how to do it:

- You need to burn 3,500 calories more than you consume to lose 1 pound.
- The average male takes in about 2,000 calories a day, and the average female about 1,800 calories a day.
- If you cut 500 calories from your typical daily diet, you would lose about 1 pound per week (500 calories x 7 days = 3,500 calories).
- If you weigh about 180 pounds and walk briskly (between 3 and 4 miles per hour), you burn about 150 extra calories a day. At that rate, you'd lose about one-third of a pound per week.
- Do this for 30 minutes every day for 365 days, and you'll lose 17 pounds.

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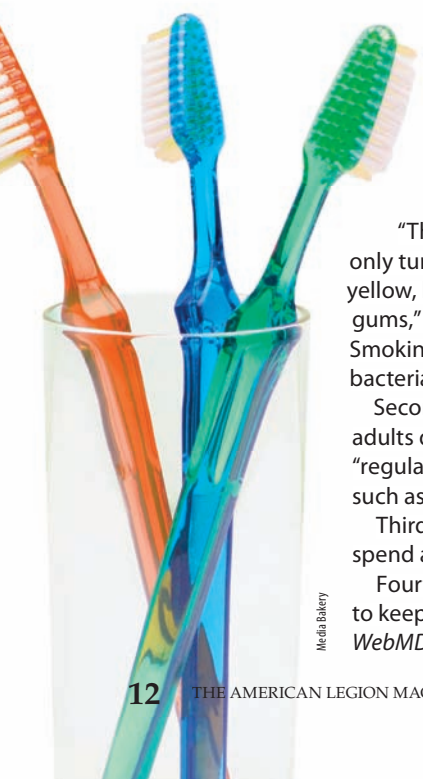

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Tooth detector

If your teeth are starting to turn yellow, dentists say there are a few simple steps you can take to help whiten them up.

First, if you're a smoker, quit.

"The nicotine and tar in cigarettes are not only turning your teeth an unsightly shade of yellow, but they're also eating away at your gums," says a report in *WebMD* magazine. Smoking also creates a "ripe environment for bacteria and plaque."

Second, visit the dentist. About half of all adults don't see a dentist yearly, even though "regular trips to the dentist can catch problems such as decay, gum disease, trauma or cancer."

Third, brush your teeth. When brushing, spend a solid two minutes on your teeth.

Fourth, floss. "Flossing is fundamental to keeping teeth and gums clean," *WebMD* explains.

Tune in to slow down

New research by Temple University argues that heart patients can help lower their heart rates, breathing rates and blood pressure by listening to music that suits their tastes. The conclusion is based on a review of 23 studies and was recently reported by HealthDay.

"If people select music they like, and the music has sedative qualities such as slow tempo, predictable harmonies and absence of sudden changes, they will be better able to relax to the music," one researcher explained.

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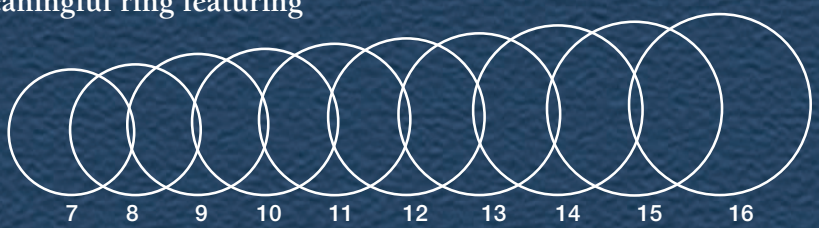

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4F26

VA, DoD target PTSD biomarkers

BY DR. JOEL KUPERSMITH

VA and Department of Defense researchers are seeking to identify biological, environmental and social factors that make troops more susceptible to post-traumatic stress disorder. The studies may help remove the stigma that has been associated with PTSD and help characterize it as a battle injury as real as any other war wound. Equally important, the work may lead to improved diagnosis of, and treatment for, PTSD, and perhaps suggest ways to prevent PTSD in the first place.

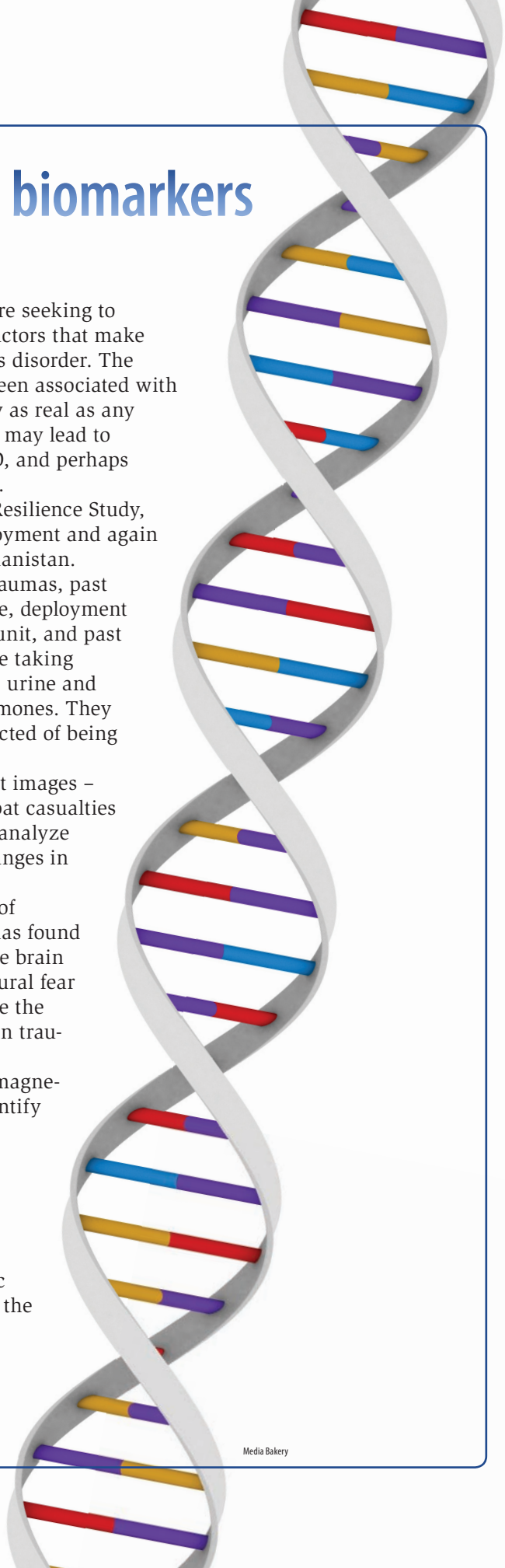
In one project, the San Diego-based Marine Resilience Study, 2,000 Marines are being evaluated before deployment and again three times after their return from Iraq or Afghanistan. Questions cover a range of issues: childhood traumas, past alcohol or drug use, marital status, spiritual life, deployment and combat experiences, support within their unit, and past or current PTSD symptoms. The researchers are taking cardiovascular measures, and collecting blood, urine and saliva samples to check the levels of stress hormones. They are also scanning DNA for gene variants suspected of being linked to stress and resilience.

In yet other tests, the Marines watch different images – some pleasant or neutral, others showing combat casualties or other disturbing scenes – while researchers analyze their responses by recording eyeblinks and changes in heart rate.

Meanwhile, work at VA's Center for Imaging of Neurodegenerative Diseases in San Francisco has found subtle brain changes associated with PTSD. The brain areas affected are those responsible for the natural fear response. Further research aims to better define the changes and show how they differ from those in traumatic brain injury.

Finally, a VA team in Minneapolis has used magnetoencephalography, a type of brain scan, to identify distinct neural patterns linked to PTSD. The researchers were able to distinguish between those with and without PTSD with better than 90-percent accuracy. The work at the Brain Sciences Center – a program funded in part by the Minnesota American Legion family – may come to play a key role in improving diagnostic accuracy and tracking disease progression and the effects of therapy.

Joel Kupersmith, M.D., is chief research and development officer for the Veterans Health Administration.



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Congress set to improve new GI Bill

BY TOM PHILPOTT

Congress appears ready to make the impressive Post-9/11 GI Bill an even better education benefit – to applause from eligible veterans, college administrators, vocational schools, trade unions and VA officials who have struggled with administering the extraordinarily complex original design.

The effort is being led by Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. In August, the committee approved and sent to the Senate floor the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 (S. 3447), which contains more than a dozen major reforms.

Meanwhile, Rep. Walter Minnick, D-Idaho, introduced a near-identical bill in the House (H.R. 5933). Both bills have strong bipartisan support and support from the Obama administration.

Key reforms proposed include:

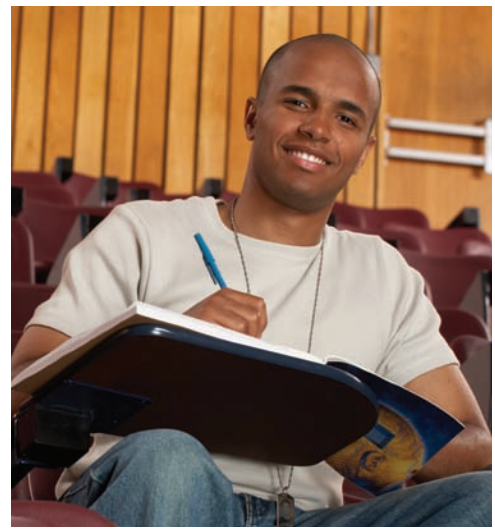
■ **Expanded training.** The Post-9/11 benefit would be broadened to cover almost any type of training, including vocational and technical schools, apprenticeships, on-the-job training and flight instruction. Currently, the new GI Bill can be used only for college degree courses. The payment ceiling for non-degree training would be the lesser of $20,000 a year or actual tuition and fee amounts. For flight instruction, it would be the lesser of $12,000 a year or actual tuition and fees.

■ **More Guardsmen eligible.** Any National Guard member called to active duty under Title 32, the authority commonly used for domestic emergencies or homeland-security missions, or to serve full time under the Active Guard Reserve (AGR) program, would be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This would be applied retroactively to mobilizations since Sept. 11, 2001.

■ **Payment system simplified.** Currently, Post-9/11 GI Bill payments for doctorate or graduate degree programs are capped at what it costs to attend the highest in-state undergraduate degree program. The new bill would fully cover tuition and fees for all in-state degree programs.

Assistance to attend private or non-state colleges and universities would also change by adopting a $20,000 cap across all states. The ceiling would no longer vary from state to state based on the highest in-state college tuition and fees.

■ **Stipend for online education.** Under the reform, 50 percent of the monthly living allowance – set to equal the military's local basic allowance for housing for the grade of E-5 – would be payable to online students who exceed half-time status.



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■ **Living allowance and OJT.** Veterans enrolled in qualified on-the-job or apprenticeship training would be paid 100 percent of the applicable living allowance for the first six months, 80 percent for the second six months, 60 percent for the third six months, 40 percent for the fourth six months and 20 percent for any subsequent periods of training.

Some features of S. 3447 will save money. For example, it clarifies that only Post-9/11 veterans with honorable discharges are eligible for the program. Another clarifying provision reminds DoD officials that they can be more discerning in how they use the transferability feature as a retention tool. The Department of Veterans Affairs now must cover the cost of unused Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits transferred to qualified spouses and children.

At the urging of VA officials, most provisions of S. 3447 would not take effect until Aug. 1, 2011. The biggest hurdle to passage is sure to be the cost. Akaka allowed the bill to clear his committee without first knowing what the Congressional Budget Office will estimate as the added budget cost for VA in fiscal 2011 and beyond.

The American Legion and other veterans service organizations were working with committee staffs to find reasonable budget offsets that could help defray at least some of the added cost.

Tom Philpott, a former Coast Guardsman, has written about veterans and military personnel issues for more than 30 years.

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Before his dramatic rescue of trapped office workers in Austin, Texas, Army veteran Robin DeHaven found career help with Helmets to Hardhats.

BY DENNIS McCAFFERTY

In Iraq, Army combat engineer Robin DeHaven survived snipers, IEDs and a mortar assault only to witness a domestic attack at home. Last February, he saw a small plane flying suspiciously low in a busy section of Austin, Texas. Next, he saw black smoke rising from a nearby glass building. In a suicide attack, the plane's pilot had slammed into a local Internal Revenue Service office. DeHaven rushed to the scene and used the 20-foot ladder he kept in his Ford work truck to rescue five people trapped on the second floor.

He firmly believes his experiences in Iraq – he completed two tours before returning home for good in December 2007 – prepared him for the daring rescue attempt.

"In Iraq, you're trained to be completely aware of your surroundings," DeHaven says. "You're on the lookout for anything that seems out of the ordinary. It also gives you the presence of mind to deal with intense situations calmly, with a clear sense of what needs to get done."

After the rescue, DeHaven became something of a national hero and celebrity. He even served as an honorary crew chief during a NASCAR race at Texas Motor Speedway. But DeHaven himself is getting a needed hand when it comes to his career as a glassworker, thanks to a national program called Helmets to Hardhats. The nonprofit effort connects National Guard, reserve, retired and transitioning active-duty servicemembers with skilled training and career opportunities in the construction industry.

The program has provided DeHaven with a job and a four-year apprenticeship. He's now a member of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, which helps support the program. He recently spoke to *The American Legion Magazine* about his experiences in Iraq, his rescue in Austin and the benefits of Helmets to Hardhats.

Q: ***What happened that day in Austin?***
A: I was on my way to a window replacement for a home. I was in the city when I saw the plane, trying to make sense of what it was. At first, I thought it must be a bird because it was flying so low. Then I got closer and thought it was someone's toy plane. When I got even closer, I realized this was really a full-sized plane. I thought the pilot had mechanical failure and needed to land. Then I saw it disappear, and a plume of smoke appeared. I knew then that it had crashed and somebody needed help.

Q: ***What happened next?***
A: I just followed the smoke. When I got to the scene, people were running in the opposite direction. They told me the building blew up and that I needed to get away, like they were doing. But then a gentleman told me that people were stuck on the second floor. He jumped in my truck,

Robin DeHaven talks to a television crew in Austin on Feb. 19. Using his work ladder, DeHaven helped save five people from a burning IRS building after a pilot flew his plane into it, killing himself and one other person. AP/Tony Gutierrez

and we headed over. We saw people yelling out the windows. I told them, "I'm coming. I got a ladder." We set up the ladder to the window, but it really wasn't secure. I climbed it and got on the second floor, though. But then we were all stuck there because the ladder was too shaky to send people down on. Then I noticed a nearby ledge. We broke out another window above it and had the ladder re-positioned to hook up to the ledge to give it more support. Then it was a matter of getting on the ledge and helping people to safe ground.

Q: ***When did you realize the crash was an act of terrorism?***
A: It wasn't until hours later. At first, I thought, "Why did he crash into the building when he had other options?" Then I found out it was an IRS building, and it all made sense.

Q: ***At the time, you were already getting valuable help yourself, from the Helmets to Hardhats program. How did that come together?***
A: When I came back from Iraq, I was searching for jobs. It was hard at first. Eventually, I got down to just two weeks to go before I'd be officially discharged from the Army. Then, at a support center, they told me about Helmets to Hardhats. I didn't know anything about it. But they connected me with the local office that ran it, and I immediately signed up. It was really easy. They connected me with a job-placement service. They had services available like résumé-writing and interview-coaching. Within a week, I had a job with Binswanger Glass in town.

Q: ***How has the apprenticeship program with the union helped?***
A: It's helping me learn so much more about the trade as I go along, like how to better install the glass and polish it. It's teaching me about the many different properties of glass, and what that means when it comes to a residential or commercial job. I know how to cut glass much better now than when I started. Next up, I'll be getting

training on reading blueprints and planning out a big commercial job. I'll learn how to present bids. By the end, I'll be trained to take on more of a supervisor's role than that of a skilled worker in the field.

Q: ***If the glass thing doesn't work, there's always the NASCAR crew job, right?***
A: Well, that was a real experience, for sure. But those guys in the pits work so hard and have to know so much about cars that it was really just a nice experience for just one day. It was part of a "local hero" promotion, and I did it for the 38 ExtenZe Racing car that Kevin Conway drives. I've never been to a track before, and you really can't appreciate the power of these cars until you're there. It's like surround-sound theater with the way those machines roar.

Q: ***Ultimately, why is a program like Helmets to Hardhats so valuable?***
A: When you're serving overseas, you can't focus on writing résumés and looking for job ads. The military is about training and concentrating on the mission. You're not thinking about your professional life after the Army. When you come home, you realize it's a whole new world and you need to adjust. This program makes it so much easier.

Dennis McCafferty is a senior writer for USA Weekend *and a frequent contributor to* The American Legion Magazine.

HELMETS TO HARDHATS

Helmets to Hardhats connects veterans to 80-plus different professional-level crafts and skills, and more than 82,000 contractors. Most opportunities are connected to federally approved apprenticeship-training programs. No prior experience is needed and no fees are required, as the services are paid for by participating trade associations, which are expected to invest $20 million in Helmets to Hardhats over the next five years. To supplement their income while getting skills training, veterans can also tap into their Montgomery GI Bill benefits.

Since its founding in 2003, more than 300,000 veterans have registered for the Helmets to Hardhats program online. "Any person who has served their country honorably can take advantage of this," says executive director Darrell Roberts. "It will benefit those who want to better themselves and start a new life professionally. With the extensive apprenticeship programs, they will learn job and life skills that no one will ever be able to take away from them. They'll be able to get a great job, start their own businesses or even build their own homes."

The American Legion supports efforts to eliminate barriers that slow the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market. Resolution 20, passed by the National Executive Committee in May, urges the Department of Defense to ensure that servicemembers are trained, tested, evaluated and issued any licenses or certification that may match their skills in the civilian job market.

www.helmetstohardhats.org

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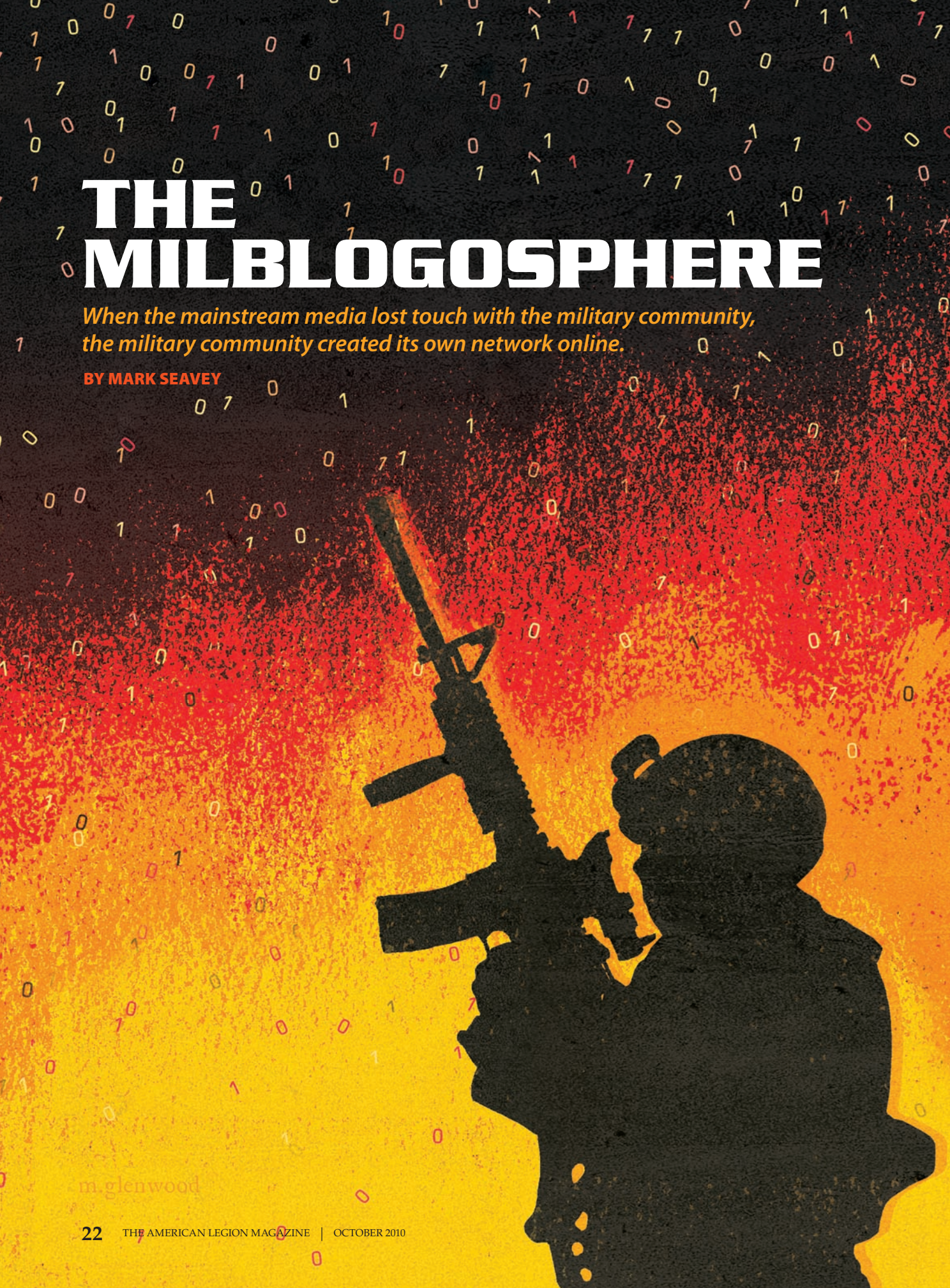
THE MILBLOGOSPHERE

When the mainstream media lost touch with the military community, the military community created its own network online.

BY MARK SEAVEY



On May 26, 2003, Army Maj. Mathew E. Schram was killed while leading a resupply convoy in western Iraq. A support operations officer for the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Carson, Colo., Schram was responsible for ensuring his troops never ran out of food, fuel or ammo.

The convoy set out early, followed by a car carrying an embedded reporter from a major weekly magazine. When insurgents ambushed the vehicles, Schram was killed by a rocket-propelled grenade while trying to protect his men, and the reporter.

Later, Matt Burden of Chicago wrote of his friend:

> *We were as close as a Green Bay Packers fan and Chicago Bears fan could possibly be ... friends as long as we didn't talk about football. In an Army largely dominated by Southerners, we Midwesterners tended to stick together. In the military, growing up 90 miles apart meant we were neighbors.*
>
> *Major Mat Schram was the BEST that this country has to offer. He always wanted to contribute, to help, to do his part, to save the world. And our world most desperately needs people like Mat Schram. He made us want to be better people, better soldiers, better men ... I will never forget him.*

What really gave Burden pause was what *wasn't* written about his friend. He added:

> *The weekly magazine never ran a story about my good friend, Mat.*

Burden vowed then that if the mainstream media wouldn't talk about Schram's sacrifice, he would. Seven years later, his "Blackfive" military blog has a readership most media outlets only dream about. Those in the press who want to know what's really on the minds of U.S. military personnel check his site and others like it daily. Meanwhile, servicemembers and veterans use such sites to voice their opinions on the issues that matter most to them. They find each other and commiserate in an expanding galaxy of online forums known collectively as the milblogosphere.

The Blog, Defined. Blogs (short for Web logs) are personal Web sites where individuals discuss life's events, usually by theme or topic. Some of the more popular cover technology, sports, law, business, parenting, science, health and politics.

There is no denying military blogs – milblogs, for short – have carved out their own niche. Hundreds now exist, many of which draw tens of thousands of visitors a day, including the year-old American Legion Burn Pit blog site, which I started and continue to edit and manage.

Bob Michael, the milblogosphere's unofficial senior statesman and historian, served 24 years as a meteorologist in the Air Force and since 2003 has blogged under the nom de guerre of "Greyhawk" at MudvilleGazette.com. He just retired after two tours in Iraq, Air Force and Army. Tall and lanky, usually wearing a cowboy hat, Michael looks every bit his Internet persona: part gumshoe detective, part beat reporter. But rather than bird-dogging crime scenes and police precincts, he does his work with speed and alacrity online.

SEPTEMBER
The Burn Pit challenges Colorado's U.S. attorney to file Stolen Valor charges against phony vet Rick Strandlof, aka Rick Duncan.

Sean Crossler

OCTOBER
Following an e-mail from a soldier who survived the COP Keating attack in Afghanistan, The Burn Pit launches a campaign that reaps $200,000 in goods for the 3-61 Cavalry.

NOVEMBER
Should the soldiers killed or wounded by Maj. Nadal Hisan at Fort Hood receive Purple Hearts?

September 2009 — October 2009 — November 2009

ADVERTISEMENT

Surplus armored safes set for massive free public giveaway

Near perfect Scratch-N-Dent Armored Safes that sell new for up to $872 are now being given away free to the first 2,080 readers who call to beat the order deadline to get the safes valuable contents

By Shawn Oyler
Universal Media Syndicate

■ **RED-TAGGED FOR FREE RELEASE:** Before any safe leaves the massive vaults of the World Reserve they are rigorously inspected. Safes that don't make the cut because of minor dings or scrapes are RED-TAGGED. Now, for the first time ever, RED-TAGGED safes are being given away for free. So if you think you couldn't afford a safe before, then now is the time to get in on this before they're gone. Because only the first 2,080 readers who call the Special Surplus Freight Hotline at 1-888-752-7124 to beat the order deadline to claim the safes contents of valuable U.S. Gov't issued coins and currency will actually get these heavy-duty Armored Safes absolutely free.

UMS --- Today, for the first time ever Scratch-N-Dent Armored Safes, loaded with U.S. coins and currency are actually being given away free to the general public.

The only thing today's readers need to do to get their free safe is to beat the order deadline to get the hoard of 221 brilliant, never-circulated U.S. Gov't coins and currency loaded inside the free safes.

It all begins at precisely 8:00am today. But only the first 2,080 readers who beat the 7 day order deadline will instantly be awarded the Armored Safes for free.

"This is all happening because thousands of near perfect Scratch-N-Dent Armored Safes have been RED-TAGGED. That's why we are able to just give them away," said Jefferson Marshall, Director, of the private World Reserve Monetary Exchange.

"Home safe sales have smashed 60 year sales records. People everywhere have been demanding heavy-duty Armored Safes, but right now we only have 2,080 left, no more, no less," Marshall said.

"Call them whatever you want, nearly new, refurbished, reconditioned, but chances are you will be hard pressed to find any flaws. These are the World Reserve's newest Armored Safe models, they simply have minor dings or blemishes. Once they get RED-TAGGED as Scratch-N-Dent, we can give them away for free," Marshall said.

"Having an Armored Safe at home is one of the best ways to prepare everyone for what could be lurking down the road. So if you thought you could never afford your very own personal Armored Safe, there's no excuse now. You can actually get one for free when you beat the deadline to buy up your very own hoard of U.S. Coins and currency," Marshall said.

"Having valuable U.S. Gov't coins and currency serves as an economic life raft during tough times," said Thomas C. Harris, Retired Deputy Director of a U.S. Treasury branch and advisor to the World Reserve.

"Remember, the hoard of U.S. coins and currency contained in the free safes will never, never, never lose their face value. You will always have something worth a lot of money," Harris said.

But, here's the best part. Among the U.S. Gov't issued coins and currency contained in each safe is the highly sought after American Eagle 1-ounce silver bullion coin made from solid .999 fine silver, 80 of the first-issued new State

Quarters, a Half-Dollar never released for circulation, a sealed roll of 25 first-issued Jefferson Nickels, 2 sealed rolls of the newly designed first-issued Pennies, a stack of historic $2 Bills and a vault tube of the Presidential Golden Dollars.

Here's why all this is so important. Just think if you would have saved never-circulated Eisenhower Dollar coins from 1974. Remarkably, they would now be worth 500% more in collector value.

No matter what, all the coins and currency in each safe will never lose their U.S. cash value.

"These safes are also one of the absolute best places to keep valuables and important papers. Everyone will now have a safe place to store their wills, jewelry, antiques, keys and even guns," Marshall said.

"When the general public gets their hands on the huge hoard of U.S. Gov't Coins and Currency and their free safes, they'll really feel like they just won the lottery," he said. ■

How to get the free Armored Safes

Today's readers just need to call the Special Surplus Freight Hotline shown in this box beginning at 8:00am today. If lines are busy keep trying, all calls will be answered. There is a strict limit of 2 free Armored Safes per household.

Terms & Conditions: The first 2,080 readers who beat the 7 day order deadline to get the hoard of U.S. Gov't issued coins and currency loaded in each will be awarded the Armored Safes free. To receive delivery of your free F2 Ballistic Armored Safe SND Model you'll only need to cover two installments for $149 each or a one time shipment fee of just $298 to have the safe fully loaded with the entire hoard of U.S. Gov't issued coins and currency.

The contents of all Scratch-N-Dent Armored Safe models carry a full Money-Back Guarantee, ensuring that credit for a full remittance will be granted for all items properly returned, less shipping for 90 days from the shipment date. The Ballistic Safes are free when you beat the order deadline for the entire hoard of U.S. Gov't Issued Coins and Currency. Failure to obtain the entire hoard will require the remittance of the retail cost of the safe.

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Those who miss the 7 day deadline will be turned away from this free offer and required to pay the full price for each Armored Safe or wait for future announcements in this or other publications if authorized by the World Reserve.

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"Six years ago, there were a handful of blogs compared to the number online today," Michael explains. "We live in a country that takes great pride in free speech, but until a few years ago, the average citizen's chance of actually being heard beyond the dinner table was pretty small. The best you could hope for was that the local paper might print your letter to the editor."

The Internet – interactive blogs in particular – changed that.

"I thought they were about the craziest thing I'd ever heard of," Michael says. "I quickly realized they were also a place where a troop could speak for himself or herself. I considered a list of good reasons not to do that, but in my mind they were all defeated by this absolute truth: if you don't speak for yourself, someone else will."

Military blogs are proven activists. They have helped raise funds for Iraqi children and wounded veterans. They have inspired songs, launched films, cut book deals and initiated grass-roots troop-support efforts.

Still, most who engage the blogs simply want to tell their stories, Michael says. "By design or happenstance, in doing so they've written their part of the history of these times, documenting a war that many feel the traditional media has failed to capture."

Blogs and other new media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are rapidly growing as traditional media hemorrhage readership. According to the Newspaper Association of America, 80.8 percent of Americans read a daily newspaper in 1964. Today, it's roughly 48 percent. But in the past five years, readership of online news has jumped by an astounding 30 million people. Advertising in print media has plummeted 18.7 percent in newspapers and 14.8 percent in magazines, while digital advertising is up nearly 10 percent. VideoUniversity.com claims that more video was uploaded to YouTube in a two-month period than has aired on CBS, NBC and ABC combined since 1948.

Facebook launched in February 2004, and now has more than 500 million users. Twitter, which allows users to send messages of 140 characters or less, now has more than 190 million individual "Tweeters" sending 65 million messages a day.

And there are blogs. No one has an accurate handle on just how many exist, but the search engine Technorati tracks more than 112 million.

The Legion's New Media. As his year as the Legion's national commander wound down in 2009, Dave Rehbein of Iowa sought better ways to communicate with veterans and their advocates. "The traditional method of drafting and distributing news releases depended on their acceptance and publication in other media," Rehbein said. "Sometimes, people wouldn't even see our messages. Burn Pit put dissemination under our control, and gave veterans an opportunity to weigh in, too."

As Legion leadership passed to Clarence Hill of Florida, another devotee of fast-paced electronic media, The American Legion's first blog site, The Burn Pit, was breaking into the milblogosphere.

Named for the burn pits of Iraq and Afghanistan where troops often gathered to talk, the site was created to give Legionnaires a forum to discuss important issues of the day. The Burn Pit has three missions: to tell the stories of America's men and women on the front lines, to discuss the military ramifications of political decisions, and to provide help when our troops need it.

Just a few weeks after launching the blog, an

DECEMBER
J.R. Salzman was a world-champion log roller before he lost an arm in Iraq. Now he's a world-champion log roller with a prosthetic limb.

JANUARY
The Burn Pit recognizes Col. Bob Howard, the nation's most decorated soldier.

FEBRUARY
The government responds to an ACLU amicus brief in the Strandlof case, which argues that lying is a constitutional right.

December 2009 | January 2010 | February 2010

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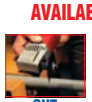

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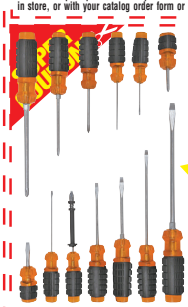

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attack occurred at Combat Outpost Keating, deep in the mountains of Afghanistan. More than 300 insurgents armed with machine guns, rockets and grenades swarmed an Afghan police post and pressed on to COP Keating, where they were repelled only after a bloody daylong battle. Eight Americans and two Afghans were killed. Many others were injured. Most of the personal belongings of U.S. troops stationed there were destroyed.

Shortly after the battle, The Burn Pit received an e-mail from one of the survivors. He talked about the battle, losing friends, and how "most people back home don't even know ... no one gives a s**t." The COP Keating Relief Fund was instantly born to help replace the personal belongings and, honestly, to prove the soldier wrong. People back home – particularly Legionnaires – did care. The Burn Pit raised $200,000 in money and goods in a matter of days.

Blog sites can perform other services, as the mysterious case of Sgt. Richard Owens proved last fall. No one knows exactly how Owens' Purple Heart citation ended up in a Salvation Army depot in upstate New York, but that's where it was found, with no kin to claim it. A paratrooper with the famous "Band of Brothers" in the 101st Airborne Division, Owens was killed on D-Day.

When I learned about the citation's discovery and posted the story on The Burn Pit, a massive manhunt ensued to find a family member who could claim the medal. The search started in Winchester, Va., where Owens' enlistment documents were located. The trail led from there back to rural southern Indiana, where birth certificates for Owens and his brother were found.

The search continued for weeks until Susanne Marshall, Owens' grandniece, was found. On Armed Forces Day, during a ceremony at an American Legion post in James Island, S.C., she received his Purple Heart. "I want everyone to know that Richard was never forgotten by our family," said Marshall, who had no idea how the citation ended up in upstate New York.

"I'm glad this brought so much attention to a man like Richard, who deserves it," she said.

Other Burn Pit initiatives were on behalf of the living, such as when Col. Van Barfoot, a Medal of Honor recipient from Virginia whose homeowners association told him to remove the towering flagpole from which he flew the Stars and Stripes. The Burn Pit came to his defense.

"The flag is a symbol of our country," National Commander Clarence Hill said after the posting. "People should fly it proudly. That's all Col. Barfoot wants to do. If he were desecrating the flag, instead, the association couldn't do a thing to stop him."

Joseph Caouette, the Legion's Americanism chairman, found the homeowners association's position "especially disgraceful given the fact that our president has ordered another 30,000 troops to Afghanistan in defense of our freedom. I wonder what they think of all of this."

The association soon dropped its demand.

The Burn Pit also came to the aid of Albert Snyder of York, Pa., whose son, Marine Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, was killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The grieving father had to deal with unwelcome visitors at his son's funeral: members of the Westboro Baptist Church, which insists that all U.S. military deaths are the result of God's wrath because the United States permits homosexual conduct.

Snyder filed suit in a Maryland court and was

MARCH
Al Snyder is ordered to repay legal fees to Westboro Baptist Church, which sent protesters to his Marine son's funeral with signs reading, "Thank God for Dead Soldiers."

APRIL
WikiLeaks site releases a video titled "Collateral Murder," which purports to show U.S. troops killing civilians. The Burn Pit takes exception to this inference.

MAY
Following a Connecticut Senate nominee's controversial claim that he served "in" Vietnam, The Burn Pit discusses why veterans have combat and noncombat distinctions.

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awarded nearly $8 million in damages. But the 4th Circuit Court overturned the decision, requiring Snyder to pay Westboro Baptist's $16,510 in legal fees. The Legion set up a legal-defense fund for Snyder, and more than $20,000 poured in via The Burn Pit. The Legion has filed an amicus brief in support of Snyder, whose case appears to be headed for the Supreme Court.

In another legal foray, The Burn Pit took on Rick Strandlof, aka Rick Duncan, who told anyone who would listen that he was a former Marine injured in the battle of Fallujah. He wove incredible tales about how he, an openly gay battalion commander of Marines, successfully led attacks in that signature battle. He also claimed he graduated from the Naval Academy, and that he was in the Pentagon on 9/11. All these stories were lies, and they violated the Stolen Valor Act of 2005, which makes it a crime for persons to wear or claim receipt of military medals for valor they did not earn.

Even as groups such as the ACLU and the Rutherford Institute rushed to support a constitutional right to make up war stories to defraud honest citizens, The Burn Pit analyzed the laws and cases and argued for punishment for those, such as Strandlof, who falsely claim heroic service. The constitutionality of the Stolen Valor Act will be taken up by the Supreme Court after a Colorado judge threw out Strandlof's case, saying – contrary to a court in California – that the law is overly broad. The Burn Pit will continue to follow the case, which is sure to draw heated reactions from our audience of veterans and military members.

Along with high-profile controversies, The Burn Pit also shines a light on unique items from around the Web, including historical essays, videos, photos and other material you won't find in the mainstream media, or even on the Legion's own site. That's what makes a blog different.

When Facebook and Twitter use dramatically increased, questions arose about the long-term viability of blogs and even of Web sites. Information had become something for consumers to engage in, rather than simply receive and interpret like an evening newspaper. Blogs have made nearly everyone capable of becoming a media outlet. Social media makes the discussion global and largely unrestricted.

And while unharnessed electronic communication has spawned such national-security threats as WikiLeaks, which this year published classified military documents and a video of U.S. troops accidentally killing noncombatants from a helicopter, the new interactive media outlets of this generation can prove cathartic for those who grapple with their wartime experiences, helpful to those who can use funds or support, and compelling to folks who simply want to go online and get into a good argument. Such is the shape of this thing we call the milblogosphere, which is still evolving seven years after a guy from Chicago just wanted to share something meaningful about a fallen friend and a hero.

After a full year of blogging at The Burn Pit, I can say that Burden's simple model has changed the lives of a bunch of soldiers from Fort Carson, a Medal of Honor recipient, the family of a World War II hero, and dozens of others whose stories too often float past the main stream of media in search of a place to call their own.

Mark Seavey, a former combat infantryman with service in Afghanistan, is new media manager for The American Legion.

JUNE
In the middle of North Carolina dwells an enclave of Vietnamese Montagnards brought here by their Special Forces friends after the war. Legion blogger Mothax spends a weekend with them.

JULY
An Illinois mayor violates Stolen Valor Act, then files a defamation suit to silence his opponent. The Burn Pit analyzes the case.

AUGUST
The Burn Pit live-blogs from the Legion's 92nd National Convention in Milwaukee.

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Cause and Effect

The Millennium Cohort Study focuses on the long-term health-care consequences of deployment.

BY MARGARET DAVIDSON

Agent Orange in Vietnam. Pills intended to protect troops against nerve-gas attacks in the Gulf War. Burn pits to dispose of military waste in Iraq.

Thousands of Americans have gone off to war and returned with ailments they suspect were caused by these or other exposures they liken to friendly fire – conditions caused by routine wartime service rather than enemy attack.

The true causes of many war-based ailments remain elusive, even after billions of dollars in federal research and years of investigation have been exhausted on the matter. The fact remains that precious little information is available to connect the dots between armed service and the effects that often follow later in life.

Since 2001, the Department of Defense has been conducting a large-scale, long-term study of military personnel and veterans to help close the information gap. The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) randomly selected the first of what were eventually about 150,000 participants from all service branches, the National Guard and the reserves, asking them to answer health-related questionnaires once every three years over a span of 21 years. Of those invited to join the cohort, 36 percent agreed to participate.

OBJECTIVE:
Determine how the health of U.S. military servicemembers and veterans changes over time, and determine the health impact of military deployments/exposures upon the adjusted incidence of chronic disease.

MCS participants have the option to respond by mail or online, and 88 percent chose to do so online in the most recent response. Along with their questionnaires, additional information is gathered by linking to health-related databases such as inpatient and outpatient information from both military and civilian facilities, and exposure and disability data.

The study is conducted from DoD's Center for Deployment Health Research, located at the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego. The MCS team is working with VA, along with British researchers who have undertaken a similar study of their country's military personnel.

Thus far, the MCS has been the basis for about 30 peer-reviewed publications and 150 scientific presentations. These findings indicate that servicemembers exposed to combat in Iraq or Afghanistan are at a higher risk for some health problems, including high blood pressure, respiratory symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and increased smoking and alcohol use. Some subgroups appear to be more vulnerable to these risks than others, and the hope is that the study will help target such individuals for intervention to prevent adverse effects.

Unlike previous studies of U.S. military personnel, the MCS is a "prospective cohort study" following a group of similar individuals over time to determine how various factors might affect outcomes. The timing of the study, which began enrolling participants just months before 9/11, allows researchers to examine the effects among those deployed in the war on terror before, during and after they went. That's important, since many veterans claim to have not experienced problems until years after they returned home. Some Vietnam War veterans, for example, didn't suffer from PTSD until 10 to 15 years after discharge.

With that long-term focus, veterans participating in the study are playing a vital role in the search for answers.

"Continued participation, even after separation from military service, is critical to understanding any long-term health effects that may be associated with military service and deployment," says Dr. Tyler Smith, the MCS' principal investigator. About 20 percent of cohort participants have since been discharged from the military.

The catalyst for the Millennium Cohort Study was complaints among veterans that deployments in the 1991 Gulf War may have led to long-term health problems. In response, the Institute of Medicine urged that a study be undertaken, Congress authorized it, and the project had this stated objective: "Determine how the health of U.S. military servicemembers and veterans changes over time, and determine the health impact of military deployments/exposures upon the adjusted incidence of chronic disease."

"We'll examine military members' incidence of chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes," Dr. Margaret Ryan, former principal investigator of the study, said in 2001.

But the questionnaire has only one question with an open-ended box involving cancer. There is nothing on neurological problems or heart problems, except high blood pressure.

In fact, most of the published studies are related to psychological and behavioral conditions rather than physical problems, even though those complaining of Gulf War illnesses had charged that past DoD studies were too quick to point to stress as the cause of their mysterious maladies.

"Study choices to date have been chosen based on the requirements, needs and

THE ROOTS OF PTSD

"When we entered Baghdad, the people were really glad to see us," explains Army Maj. Jeff Hall, thinking back to his first deployment. "It just seemed like we could do our job."

His second deployment, however, was completely different. "We essentially were just kind of driving around until we got blown up," he says in a online video on the Real Warriors Campaign's Web site, encouraging servicemembers with post-traumatic stress disorder to get help.

Two of the men in Hall's attached tank unit were killed in an IED explosion. "It really shook me to the bone," he says.

When he came home, he became increasingly angry, distanced himself from his family, started giving away his possessions and even contemplated suicide. Finally, Hall's commanding officer encouraged him to get treatment for PTSD. It changed his life, and since then, he's urged others like him to do the same.

And there are many others. Of those who reported combat exposure in Iraq or Afghanistan, 8 percent had new onsets of PTSD symptoms, according to a Millennium Cohort Study finding published in the *British Medical Journal*. The number was about five times higher among those who reported combat exposure than those who deployed but did not see combat. Symptoms among those who didn't deploy were also more common than among those who deployed but had no combat exposure.

The study's authors emphasize that "specific combat exposures, rather than deployment itself, significantly affect the onset of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder after deployment."

Those who reported having been assaulted appear to be especially vulnerable to new PTSD symptoms, according to MCS findings published in *Epidemiology*. Another MCS study result, published last year in the *Journal*, concluded that mental or physical health before combat exposure significantly influences the risk of PTSD after deployment.

Published results based on the cohort study report increased risks of psychological and behavioral problems, such as depression and alcohol abuse. Deployed men and women with combat exposure had the highest onset of depression, compared to those who deployed but received no combat exposure, and those who had not deployed. Those who deployed with no combat exposure were at lower risk than those who did not deploy.

Those exposed to combat – particularly young active-duty servicemembers, Guardsmen and reservists – increasingly turn to alcohol, according to MCS results published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

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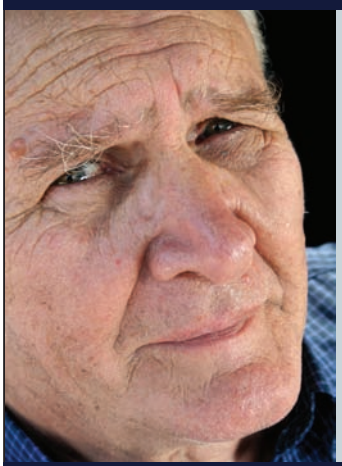

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concerns of veterans, providers and leadership in DoD and VA," Smith explained. "Because of the longitudinal design of the Millennium Cohort Study, broad assessments of rare outcomes like cancer were not included early on, though they will be expanded on in later questionnaires as the cohort ages."

He adds that other studies are under way, with focuses on cancer, heart disease, autoimmune disorders and chronic multisymptom illness. Future research will include neurological testing.

In the past nine years, thousands of military servicemembers and veterans have taken the time to fill out MCS questionnaires. About 77,000 enrolled in the cohort's first phase, beginning in July 2001. More than 30 percent had been deployed. About 31,000 more enrolled in 2004, and 40,000 more in 2007. Plans call for adding 60,000 more this year. About 70 percent of those in the cohort have provided at least one follow-up response. More than half have deployed since 2001.

Additional responses on the impact of military service and deployment on family health are to be gathered during the 2010-2011 survey cycle. An estimated 10,000 spouses are expected to enroll, about half of whose husbands or wives will be, or will have been, deployed at least once to Iraq or Afghanistan.

With so many responses, the MCS is one of the largest cohort studies in military history, but few seem to be aware of it.

"There needs to be greater outreach," says Joe Sharpe, director of The American Legion's Economic Division and the Legion's representative on the MCS Scientific Steering and Advisory Committee. Sharpe calls the study's preliminary data "fascinating," but says he would like to see more published findings.

Existing and future MCS studies offer the promise of a better understanding of the health effects of deployments and the resulting possibility of improving the health of past, current and future military personnel.

"We try to transition this data into real-world benefits for the servicemembers," Smith says. "Participants should feel confident that they are contributing to an effort of profound public-health importance."

Margaret Davidson is a freelance writer who specializes in covering medical issues.

WHY THE SHORTNESS OF BREATH?

"Before my service in Iraq, I was physically fit. I used to run several miles without much effort. During high school, I ran track and cross country, wrestled and played football. I am a lifetime nonsmoker. But now I have trouble walking from my house to my car. I simply run out of breath."

That's how Rocky Bixby described problems he believes were caused by his deployment to Iraq with the Oregon Army National Guard in 2003. Speaking to the Senate Democratic Policy Committee in August 2009, he said his shortness of breath and persistent cough may have been caused by a toxic chemical used at a water-treatment plant where his unit provided security.

Results from DoD's large-scale Millennium Cohort Study indicate that soldiers and Marines deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan face an increased short-term risk of respiratory symptoms, including shortness of breath and coughing.

The MCS study published last year in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* said the findings suggest that "specific exposure, rather than deployment in general, are determinants of post-deployment respiratory illness" since the length of exposure time did not correspond with the amount of risk of symptoms.

Fumes from burn pits in Iraq used to dispose of the U.S. military's waste, inhalation of desert dust and lead-zinc smelters have been suggested as other possible causes.

"The current results are reassuring in that no increase in reported asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema was noted in the short term," the researchers wrote. However, since the veterans studied were only followed for an average of 2.7 years, chronic conditions could not be fully explored, they said. Further research will help determine whether increased symptom reporting was transient or indicative of chronic illness.

MCS researchers also looked at the effects of deployment on high blood pressure and diabetes. Findings reported in *Hypertension* indicate that servicemembers with multiple combat exposures, particularly those who personally witnessed a death due to war or disaster, are at a higher risk for newly reported chronic high blood pressure. However, those who deployed generally had a lower amount of reported incidence of high blood pressure than those who didn't. The researchers commented that this was "likely because of deployers being healthier than nondeployers."

Deployers with and without combat exposure were also found to have a lower rate of newly reported diabetes than those who did not deploy.

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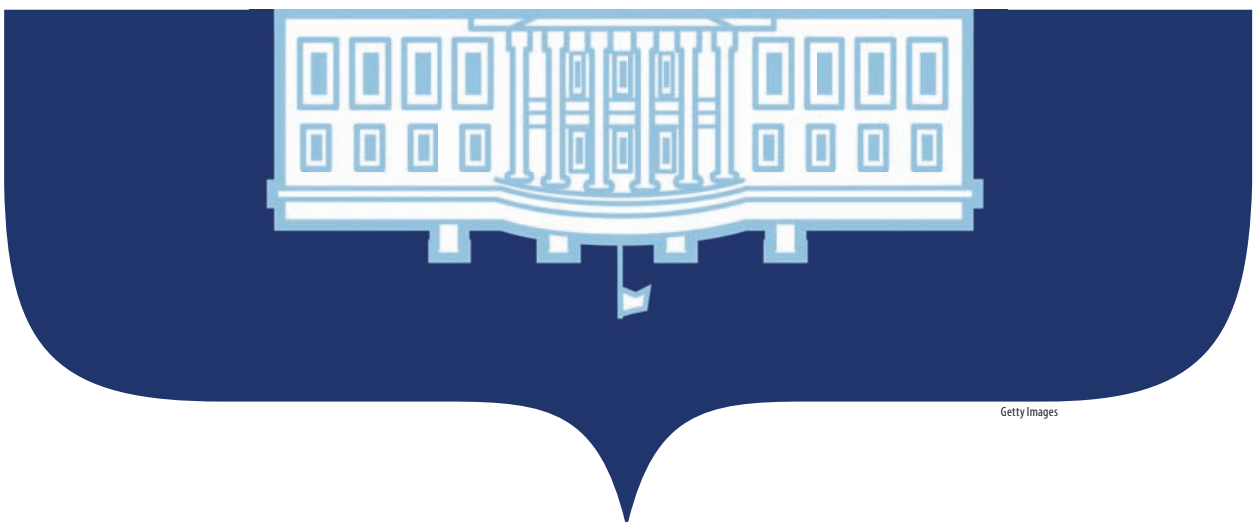
BY ALAN W. DOWD



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Let's play a game of global guess-who.

What country is helping rebuild Afghanistan, fighting piracy off the coast of Africa, keeping a close eye on China and fueling the global economy, all while remaining unembarrassed about its close association with the United States?

This mystery ally may sound like a description of Britain or Japan, but it's actually India – America's newest partner in peace.

Natural Allies. The U.S.-India partnership is built on shared values, shared economic interests and shared threats.

The two countries have strong democratic credentials. India calls itself the world's largest democracy, and the United States considers itself the world's oldest continuous democracy. Moreover, as President Barack Obama has pointed out, both India and the United States embrace freedom, human rights and an entrepreneurial ethos. "The United States and India are natural allies," Obama observes.

Even as other countries wax and wane in their support for the United States, India's 1.1 billion people have been remarkably consistent in their pro-American views: more than 65 percent claimed to have a favorable opinion of the United States in 2002, 71 percent in 2005 and 76 percent in 2009.

This may be a function of the growing economic ties between India and the United States. Total U.S.-India trade has exploded from $14.3 billion in 2000 to $43 billion in 2009 – a 300-percent increase. The Indian economy is among the world's 12 largest.

Moreover, global markets increasingly count on India to police the ocean that bears its name. "India is key to ensuring the flow of trade through much of the Indian Ocean," says Eric Wertheim, editor of *The Naval Institute Guide to Combat Fleets of the World*.

As a report by the Stimson Center details, "one-fifth of the world's energy supplies now travels across the Indian Ocean," and cargo ships rely on it to carry goods from Asia to the Middle East and Europe. "Between 2003 and 2012, the volume of that trade is expected to triple."

At the intersection of economic and security ties, the United States and India hammered out a landmark deal on nuclear cooperation in 2008, allowing technology transfers and U.S. investment in India's nuclear-power industry.

The George W. Bush administration laid the groundwork for these new technology and security ties by declaring in 2002 that "U.S. interests require a strong relationship with India." By 2005, the two countries had signed a long-term agreement, opening the way to unprecedented U.S.-India defense cooperation.

"It was inevitable that India would find common ground with the United States," Wertheim says, noting that the two need each other. "It is important for the United States to have friends in this vital region," he explains. "And for the sake of military modernization and long-term security, it's important for India to tilt toward the West."

Checking China. The challenge for Washington is to resist the inclination to push too hard or too fast, Wertheim says. "We can't be overbearing with India without risking alienating India," he warns.

So far, Wertheim believes the United States has struck the right posture.

For example, cabinet-level exchanges now take place as part of what Washington calls its "strategic dialogue" with New Delhi.

Joint military maneuvers began in 2002 and continue today, usually under the codename "Cope India." Calling the U.S.-India security relationship "indispensable," Defense Secretary Robert Gates says the "number and complexity" of these exercises have increased in recent years.

In 2004, for example, the United States and India conducted air-combat exercises. In 2005, they focused on counterinsurgency and jungle warfare.

Cope India 2009, the largest U.S.-India war games ever, featured search-and-rescue training, airlifts, airdrops and armored maneuvers. The United States even deployed its high-tech Stryker combat vehicle to central India for the two-week exercise. As Lt. Gen. Benjamin Mixon told the Armed Forces Press Service, the exercises were "on the high end of fighting."

This should come as no surprise. As U.S. Joint Forces Command observed in 2008, India has a "proud martial tradition." Combined with its newfound interest in military modernization and long-standing commitment to democracy, India possesses all the ingredients of a close U.S. ally. Indeed, Gates has labeled India "a partner and net

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By Mark Woods
Universal Media Syndicate

(UMS) Everyone hates high heat bills. But we're all sick and tired of simply turning down the thermostat and then being cold.

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The only thing readers have to do is call the National Distribution Hotline before the 7-day deadline with their order for the handmade Amish Fireplace Mantle. Everyone who does is instantly being awarded the miracle heater absolutely free.

This is all happening to announce the HEAT SURGE Roll-n-Glow® Fireplace which actually rolls from room-to-room so you can turn down your thermostat and take the heat with you anywhere. That way, everyone who gets them first can immediately start saving on their heat bills.

Just in time for winter weather, portable Amish encased fireplaces are being delivered directly to the doors of all those who beat the deadline.

These remarkable fireplaces with patent pending technology are being called a miracle because they have a stunning fireless flame that gives you the peaceful flicker of a real fire but without any flames, fumes, smells, ashes or mess. Everyone is getting them because they require no chimney and no vent. You just plug them in.

The *Fireless* Flame® looks so real it amazes everybody because it has no real fire. So what's the catch? Well, soft spoken Amish craftsmen who take their time hand building the mantles have a process that forces a strict household limit of 2 to keep up with orders.

GENUINE AMISH MANTLES MADE IN THE HEARTLAND OF OHIO: Everyone wants to save money on heat bills this winter, so entire Amish communities are working from the crack of dawn to build these real wood fireplace mantles to last forever. The Light Honey Oak mantle is a real steal at just two hundred ninety-eight dollars because all those who beat the order deadline by calling the National Hotline at 1-866-843-3581 to order the fireplace mantles are actually getting the hi-tech imported *Fireless* Flame HEAT SURGE miracle heaters for free.

"We can barely keep up ever since we started giving heaters away free. With winter just around the corner, everyone's trying to get them. Amish craftsmen are working their fingers to the bone to be sure everyone gets their delivery in time for Christmas," confirms Frederick Miller, National Shipping Director.

"These portable Roll-n-Glow Fireplaces are the latest home decorating sensation. They actually give you a beautifully redecorated room while they quickly heat from wall to wall. It's the best way to dress up every room, stay really warm and slash your heat bills all at the same time," says Josette Holland, Home Makeover Expert.

And here's the best part. Readers who beat the 7-day order deadline are getting their imported hi-tech miracle heaters free when encased in the Amish built real wood fireplace mantles. The mantles are being handmade right here in Ohio in the heartland of Amish country where they are beautifully hand-rubbed, stained and varnished.

You just can't find custom made Amish mantles like this in the national chain stores. That makes the Light Honey Oak mantle a real steal for just two hundred ninety-eight dollars since the entire cost of the miracle heater is free.

This free giveaway is the best way to slash heating bills and stay warm this fall and winter. The HEAT SURGE Roll-n-Glow Fireplace gives you zone heating and all the beauty and warmth of a built-in fireplace but rolls from room-to-room so it can also save you a ton of money on heating bills.

Even people in California and Florida are flocking to get them so they may never have to turn on their furnace all winter. And since it uses

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How It Works: The HEAT SURGE miracle heater is a work of engineering genius from the China coast so advanced, you simply plug it into any standard outlet. It uses only about 9¢ of electric an hour on the standard setting. Yet, it produces up to an amazing 4,606 BTU's on the high setting. So watch out, a powerful on board hi-tech heat turbine silently forces hot air out into the room from the vent so you feel the bone soothing heat instantly. It even has certification of Underwriters Laboratories coveted UL listing. It also comes with a limited full year replacement or money back warranty less shipping plus a 30-Day Satisfaction Guarantee. OH and FL resident transactions require the remittance of applicable sales tax. Sorry no shipments to MA residents.

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The hi-tech silent heat turbine takes in cold air

How to get 2 free heaters

The National Toll Free Hotlines are now open. All those who beat the 7-day order deadline to cover the cost of the Amish made Fireplace Mantle and shipping get the HEAT SURGE miracle heater free.

A strict limit of 2 per household has been imposed. Since some home woodworkers want to build their own mantle piece, they are letting people get the imported miracle heater alone for just $249. Or, with orders for the Amish made mantle you get the miracle heater free.

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only about 9 cents of electric an hour on the standard setting, the potential savings are absolutely incredible.

"We are making sure no one gets left out, but you better hurry because entire communities of Amish craftsmen are straining to keep up with demands. For now, we are staying out of the large national retail stores in order to let readers have two per household just as long as they call before the deadline," confirms Miller.

It's a really smart decision to get two right now because for only the next 7 days you get both miracle heaters free. That's like putting five hundred bucks right in your pocket and you can save even more money on your monthly heating bills.

"Everyone's calling to get one but those who are getting their Christmas shopping done early are surprising the whole family by getting two. So when lines are busy keep trying or log onto amishfireplaces.com. We promise to get to every call. Then we can have a delivery truck out to your door right away with your beautiful Heat Surge Roll-n-Glow Fireplace," Miller said.

"You'll instantly feel bone soothing heat in any room. You will never have to be cold again," he said. ■

On the worldwide web:
www.amishfireplaces.com

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■ **EASILY ROLLS ANYWHERE:** This is the portable Roll-n-Glow® Fireplace that easily rolls from bedroom to living room to keep you warm. No vents, no chimney and no tools. Just plug it in.

■ **SAVES ON BILLS:** Everyone can get low bills and stay warm and cozy. The Roll-n-Glow Fireplace saves a ton of money and makes your front room look like a million bucks.

■ **SAFE FLAME:** The *Fireless* Flame looks so real it fools everyone but there is no real fire. That makes the flame window safe to the touch under the watchful eye of a parent. It's where the kids will play and the cat and dog will sleep.

■ **FREE:** Get this $249 miracle heater free. It is being given away free to all who beat the 7-day order deadline for your choice of the Light Honey Oak or Manor Cherry finish Amish Mantles. The free heater comes already encased.

provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond."

Increasingly, the operative word here is "beyond."

- In mid-2009, Indian warships steamed to the Atlantic Ocean for anti-submarine warfare exercises with the French and British navies.
- The Indian navy is participating in counterpiracy operations off the coast of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. In December 2009, Indian warships and helicopters foiled a pirate attack against a Norwegian tanker in the Gulf of Aden.
- Elements of the Indian air force deployed to Oman for joint exercises in late 2009. As *Defense News* reports, India and Oman have inked a defense deal that includes maritime security and naval exercises, and even contemplates stationing Indian troops in Oman. Earlier this year, the countries' defense ministers began planning for joint anti-piracy operations.
- India is upgrading its military-to-military ties with Israel and Japan. In fact, Japan and India recently agreed to a defense action plan to increase maritime military cooperation.

The convergence of India and Japan is being fueled by one of the very same factors fueling the U.S.-India partnership: the rapid emergence of China.

India and China went to war in the not-too-distant past. Barely noticed in the United States, Chinese troops frequently violate Indian territory. India worries about China's increasing investment in neighboring countries as a Trojan-horse strategy to undermine India's regional standing. And China's military buildup – highlighted by the acquisition of power-projecting naval assets, warplanes, missilery, satellites and information technologies – has the attention of everyone in the Asia-Pacific neighborhood.

Indeed, India and the United States increasingly view one another as a helpful counterweight to China, each providing strategic depth vis-à-vis China in the global chess match.

While sidestepping any direct reference to China, Obama says India is helping shape "a stable, peaceful and prosperous Asia" and calls America's relationship with India "one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century."

Fighting Terror. This spirit of partnership is a dramatic and welcome change. After all, India and the United States were often at odds during the Cold War. India refused to side with – or be manipulated by – either Moscow or Washington. Instead, the country carved out its own path and led the nonaligned movement.

The days of distance from the United States appear to be over for India.

The rise of China may have been the impetus for India's tilt toward Washington, but "terrorism has sped the partnership," Wertheim says.

Immediately after 9/11, India offered its unequivocal support to the United States, and remains a stalwart partner in the effort to stabilize Afghanistan, the spawning ground of 9/11.

India is pouring $1.3 billion in development aid into Afghanistan – what Gates calls "extraordinary support." As *The New York Times* reports, India is building hospitals, schools, roads and Afghanistan's new parliament.

To be sure, this is partly a function of India's desire to counter Pakistani influence over Afghanistan. However, India's commitment to a more stable Afghanistan is a function of something more than regional rivalry. India understands the deadly danger of terrorism.

To borrow the parlance of the Cold War, India is a front-line state in the war on terror, weathering a relentless barrage of attacks in the past decade.

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The State Department places India "among the world's most terrorism-afflicted countries."

Terrorists attacked the Indian parliament in 2001. Commuter-train attacks and bomb-laden taxis killed 71 in 2003. Attacks on outdoor markets, schools and Hindu festivals killed 309 in 2005 and 2006. Attacks on trains, mosques and an amusement park killed 119 in 2007. And then there was 2008, a year that proved to be a bloody turning point for India.

After a terrorist attack on India's embassy in Afghanistan killed 54 people, the jihadists launched what amounted to an invasion of Mumbai, India's financial center, in late 2008. The siege of Mumbai killed 183 people, including six Americans. But it was the attack's military sophistication and precision – the terrorists launched their assault from the ocean and seized three hotels, a train station and a Jewish religious center, and employed GPS systems to coordinate the operation – that caught the world's attention.

"From a military perspective," Wertheim observes, "Mumbai was a sophisticated seaborne attack. India sees Mumbai as its 9/11."

Spurred by the Mumbai attacks, India is strengthening its coastal defenses and deploying new anti-terror commando teams. Fifteen new coast-guard stations will dot India's shoreline in the near future.

Upgrades. These upgrades represent just a fraction of a much larger military-modernization effort now under way in India.

Already having the fifth-largest navy and fourth-largest air force on earth, India currently deploys 120 warships and 900 warplanes. But many of these assets are far too old to serve India's 21st-century needs and interests. Hence, New Delhi is in the midst of a $50 billion spending binge between now and 2015. In fact, Indian defense spending jumped by 34 percent in 2009.

New Delhi is in the midst of a $50 billion spending binge between now and 2015. In fact, Indian defense spending jumped by 34 percent in 2009.

These fresh investments in the military are crucial, especially on the maritime front, Wertheim claims. "India's submarine program badly needs to be modernized," he says. Some 60 percent of India's aging submarine fleet will need to be retired by 2012.

India plans to build more than 100 new warships in the next 10 years. Thirty-two of the ships are already under construction, with 75 slated for christening by 2019. Recent and planned acquisitions include up to three new aircraft carriers, a U.S.-built amphibious docking ship and six new subs, as well as heavy-lift cargo planes and the C4ISR assets needed to network a modern military force. India also plans to acquire 126 fighter bombers.

Even with its submarine deficiencies, India is a bona fide naval power, Wertheim says.

"India's navy is in the top tier of Asian navies, just behind Japan and South Korea, and roughly equivalent with China," he says.

Internationally, he sees India playing important niche roles that will augment U.S. naval power in the coming years, including combating piracy, securing regional sea lanes and contributing to the "1,000-Ship Navy" concept.

Rapidly moving beyond the conceptual stage, this navy of navies enfolds the combined sea power of the United States and its closest allies, including members of NATO, Japan, Australia and, increasingly, India. We see glimpses of what it can accomplish in the multinational anti-piracy task force, and in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative.

In the same way, the U.S.-India partnership is no longer a conceptual possibility, but rather a here-and-now reality. Whether it's on the high seas, the front lines of the war on terror, or the frontiers of freedom and free markets, India and the United States are learning that they can do great things as partners.

Alan W. Dowd is a contributing editor for The American Legion Magazine.

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Frontier Man

BY MATT GRILLS
PHOTOS BY TOM STRATTMAN

Jimmie Foster is The American Legion's first national commander from Alaska.

When Jimmie Foster got orders to Alaska, he didn't see a duty station listed – just a ZIP code. Not unusual for the Army. "I had no idea where I was going," he recalls with some amusement.

He made some calls, and a buddy in the personnel office helped him determine he'd been assigned to Fort Richardson.

On Halloween night 1985, Foster, his wife Rehta and their two sons arrived in Anchorage, and immediately fell in love with the state known as "America's last frontier."

He's called Alaska home ever since. "I don't like snow, which is kind of weird, because we get so much of it," he says. "But the beauty of the land and the people outweigh everything else."

Last month, at the 92nd National Convention in Milwaukee, The American Legion elected Foster national commander – Alaska's first. He's proud to shine the spotlight on a state he says takes good care of its nearly 70,000 veterans. Alaska's 33 Legion posts "fight tooth and nail for them, and their dependents," Foster says.

Through the Ranks. Foster's Legion résumé is solid. A 29-year member, he's volunteered at every level. Nationally, he's served on the Economic, Internal Affairs and Legislative commissions, and as Legislative chairman from 2006 to 2008. Prior to that, he represented Alaska on the National Executive Committee.

Back home, Foster served as department commander in 1999-2000. He has been on nearly every department committee, including Americanism, Economic, Employment, Internal Affairs, Legislative, Military Affairs and National Security. During his term as chairman of Membership & Post Activities, Alaska finished first in the nation on target-date membership.

Foster is a member of Spenard Post 28 in Anchorage, where he was adjutant for several years and served as commander in 1989-1990. He's also been the Western District adjutant for seven department commanders.

So, what hasn't he done? Forget a name or a face, for one thing.

"Jimmie's got a memory like a steel trap," says Gene Franks, Alaska's department adjutant. "He knows everybody and their wife, their dog, their next-door neighbor."

In other words, Foster's a people person. That goes a long way in a department as geographically vast as Alaska, where travel and communication are never taken for granted. One of its three districts is larger than the entire state of Texas, and in the winter, some towns and cities are accessible only by airplane or dog sled.

For Alaska's department commanders, then, keeping members on the same page – bringing them together to support a Legion goal or program – is no small feat. Leading 55 departments as the Legion's national commander is an even bigger challenge.

"I think if anybody can do it, Jimmie can," Franks says.

Farm Boy Turned Marine. Foster grew up in Delaware, Okla., the son of a World War II Army veteran and the fifth of 10 children. "I caught it from the top and the bottom," he says dryly.

And, occasionally, he caught it from his dad, who Foster says was a strict disciplinarian. "It didn't make a difference if you were male or female. If it was your time to get your little tail warmed up, that would happen."

Life revolved around the farm, and Foster remembers days when he kept the school bus waiting as he finished his chores. Outside class,

Foster is a member of Spenard Post 28 in Anchorage, where he has served as both commander and adjutant.

he participated in 4-H, Future Farmers of America, and numerous livestock shows. He and his younger brother collected several trophies in sheep, pigs and even horses.

After high school, Foster attended and graduated from Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, where he studied agriculture education. During his second summer there, he met Rehta in a humanities class. One of her projects involved sewing a toga, and he was selected to be her model. That's how he remembers it, anyway.

Rehta says he first noticed her walking down the street and told his roommate he'd marry her. One day, after class, Foster walked her to her car and asked her out. For their first date, he showed up on a bicycle, sporting a sore ankle he'd injured in dormitory hijinks.

"We just clicked," she says.

A year later, they married. Foster took a job in the textile business, and later worked at a grocery. By this time, the couple had a son, and Foster was considering a military career. In 1973, on a bet with a co-worker, he joined the Marine Corps.

"He told me I wouldn't do it, and we both ended up going," Foster says. "We were in the same platoon at recruit training in San Diego. He went aviation, and I had the distinct honor of staying right there," at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot.

Rehta describes the period as "rough." U.S. troops were still in Vietnam, she worried her husband might have to go, and they'd just had a baby. After his two years were up, Foster left the Marines and they moved back to Oklahoma.

"At times, I regret getting out," he says. "I loved the Marines, and if they'd have cared about a family, I'd probably have stayed. They'd actually tell you, 'If we'd wanted you to have a family, we'd have issued you one.' And they meant it. At the time, that was a big letdown."

TOP TEN THINGS YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT JIMMIE FOSTER

10 In his youth, he worked for a rodeo and even did saddle bronc riding.

9 You won't find him listening to country-and-western music. "Somebody's always drunk or running off with somebody else. I'm positive and upbeat. I don't like negative stuff that will bring you down."

8 Had he not joined the military, he would probably be teaching agriculture.

7 Chuck Norris' "Lone Wolf McQuade" and the "Harry Potter" series top his list of favorite movies.

6 As a boy, he loved Doris Day.

5 He'll eat halibut "any day, any way, any time. I don't care how you cook it. You cannot mess it up."

4 He proposed to his wife, Rehta, at Christmastime by giving her a rubber duck with a ring tied around its neck.

3 He lives in Alaska but hates snow. "I despise it. Every time it snows, I start cussing."

2 He watches "American Idol."

1 Count on him for at least one or two songs at his post's karaoke night: "The Green, Green Grass of Home," or something by The Righteous Brothers – "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'," maybe, or "Unchained Melody." He quips, "That's my going-home song. When I sing that, I'm done."

Even so, Foster wasn't finished with the military. Six months later, he joined the Army and became a Morse code interceptor. The job was being phased out, but his clerical skills got him a regimental staff position. He did on-the-job training in legal, and chose it for his secondary MOS.

Over the next 18 years, Foster and his family went wherever the Army sent him: Fort Bliss, Texas, then Germany, then Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. He was drafted into Army Recruiting Command and went to school at Fort Harrison in Indianapolis, and spent the next three years doing recruiting out of Detroit. Finally, he ended up at Fort Richardson, Alaska.

Their sons, Christopher and Michael, loved the frequent moves. "They'd say, 'All right, Dad, we've been here seven months. When are we leaving?' They kind of got into it," Foster says.

This post, though, was different. Where else do moose wander into your back yard? Where else can you catch a 54-pound king salmon, or a 202-pound halibut? Where else can you eat a Mondo burger, "the best burger in all of Alaska"? (Foster's a hamburger connoisseur, and declares he'd drive a hundred miles for a good one.)

In 1992, the Army assigned Foster to Fort Huachuca, Ariz., where he worked as a chief legal NCO. Though he wanted to stay in Alaska, "I couldn't get any more extensions," he says.

With only two years left to reach the magic 20, Foster vowed to return north as soon as he got out of the Army. True to his word, he was back in Anchorage by noon the day of his retirement.

Friend to Veterans. For the next 10 years, Foster worked as office manager for one of the oldest and largest law firms in Alaska. But his heart was in helping veterans. He began looking for a new job, and a conversation with Leon Bertram – at the time the Legion's leading department service officer in Alaska – took him in a new direction.

In 2006, Foster joined Bertram's staff, assisting veterans who are filing benefits claims. Whether he's on the road or in his office at the new VA clinic in Anchorage, he enjoys hearing their war stories and guiding veterans through the twists and turns of the claims process.

"A lot of them come to you when they're at wit's end," Foster says. "Some are embarrassed. If they're married, maybe one of them has lost a job and medical bills are piling up. They don't realize having a claim could mean monetary compensation for each 10 percent, and they're just astounded they waited 20, 30, 40, even 50 years to come in."

Occasionally, a veteran tells Foster that he read in the *Alaska Legionnaire* about a service officer in Anchorage who is campaigning to be national commander. "I say, 'You're talking to him,'" he says. "They're like, 'Are you kidding me, man? You're the guy, and you're helping me with my claim?'"

Jim Pisa, one of Alaska's department service officers, says Foster "goes above and beyond to help a veteran get what's due to him."

His knowledge of both sides of VA – health and benefits – makes Foster an ideal voice for The American Legion on Capitol Hill, Pisa adds. "He won't have to look around for an answer from somebody. He's going to be a great commander."

Foster and his wife, Rehta, met as students at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College. They have two sons, Christopher and Michael, and four grandchildren.

Foster is a strong believer in the Legion's Four Pillars, particularly mentoring youth. Oratorical, Boys State, American Legion Baseball – he's been involved with all of them. And throughout his year as commander, he'll encourage Legionnaires to support the Child Welfare Foundation.

"I think we do a great job with it, and I'm a sucker for kids," he explains. "They're our future. We can't shortchange them. You never know how your gift may change the life of somebody who could have gotten into drugs and alcohol or a gang. Don't give up on them."

As for Foster's own children, they left home years ago and have their own families now. Christopher works for the Army Acquisition Corps in Kaiserslautern, Germany. Michael drives trucks for Air Liquide in Whittier, Calif.

"They were our first priority," Rehta says. "To this day, Jimmie's really close to both of his sons."

As you'd expect, the Foster clan is a Legion family. Michael belongs to Sons of The American Legion, and Christopher is a dual Legion-SAL member. Rehta is well known in Alaska's American Legion Auxiliary, which she has served as a unit, district and department president.

"She's as active as I am, sometimes more," Foster says admiringly.

Like his predecessors as national commander, he's excited about the Legion's recent leaps forward using the necessary communication tools of today: a dynamic Web presence, online social networking, Twitter.

"We're getting new members every day," he says. "It's like the movie 'Field of Dreams.' You believe, they come."

Nevertheless, he's convinced that traditional recruiting methods remain the Legion's No. 1 way of finding and keeping members. The Internet can't replace a warm handshake, a smile and the camaraderie found in a Legion post.

"If the computers stop working tomorrow, what are you going to do?" he says. "I think we're on the right path, but we can't forget the basics."

In fact, Foster's motto is Serving America's Veterans Every Day, or SAVED. He'd like to see Legionnaires personally interacting with other veterans daily, "whether they're just talking to a vet and making sure they know they're appreciated, or helping them out in some way, whatever they need."

Over the next year, expect to see that one-on-one approach in Foster's leadership style.

"If my BlackBerry is vibrating, I'm not going to read my message if we're having a conversation," he says, laughing. "I can wait. I believe in technology, but don't lose the personal touch."

Matt Grills is managing editor of The American Legion Magazine.

Keep up with National Commander Jimmie Foster online: ***www.legion.org/jimmiefoster***

George Ciampa, left, interviews a veteran of the 8th Air Force for his latest film, now in production.
Bruce Green

Having Been There

D-Day veteran filmmaker continues his mission to 'let freedom ring.'

BY JEFF STOFFER

George Ciampa has always been obsessed by death. As a child, he was deeply disturbed by the funeral of a young cousin and the wake of a grandfather. Later, he was devastated when his wife, Doris, died from lymphoma. Widowed with two kids to raise, Ciampa didn't date for a decade.

During World War II, death really put a stamp on his conscience. Ciampa served in the Army's 607th Graves Registration Company, following U.S. soldiers from Normandy nearly to Berlin on the bloody march to liberate Europe from Hitler's grip. Ciampa was 19, and his job was to collect, document and bury the dead in temporary cemeteries. "One of the guys in my outfit estimated that we handled 75,000 bodies," he explains.

Ciampa's strong feelings about death are paralleled by his love of freedom. Passing through newly liberated towns, villages and concentration camps in Europe, he saw what happens when freedom is taken away.

Sharing that message is now his life's mission. At 81, Ciampa began a remarkable career in 2006 as a documentary filmmaker, retracing his wartime steps alongside schoolteachers, and interviewing veterans and Europeans who survived the occupation and hard-won liberation.

"Let Freedom Ring: The Lesson is Priceless" has been screened at the annual GI Film Festival, continues to be aired on PBS stations, and will be distributed to schools on DVD when funding is available. Ciampa's follow-up film, "Let Freedom Ring: Memories of France," follows a similar storyline, focusing on the French liberation.

At 85, he's now raising funds to produce his third film, now in pre-production, on the sacrifices of the U.S. Army's 8th Air Force during World War II.

A member of American Legion Post 222 in Laguna Beach, Calif., whose work can be found at **www.letfreedomringforall.org,** Ciampa recently spoke with *The American Legion Magazine*.

Q: *What inspires you to make films like these?*

A: It goes back to when I turned 19 years old in Belgium. We had just liberated a town there called Fosse, and there was an older gentleman who had been a botanist in the United States. He had gone home to Belgium for a vacation and then couldn't leave. It was 1939. The Nazis took over. When I met him, he was living in an apartment right above a store, and he had a big sign there that said *liberté*. He wrote down for me what liberty meant to him, in three different languages. I still have that. It really struck a chord.

Go forward then to the 50th anniversary of the Normandy invasion, the first time I went back. I took my two kids with me. They were 22 and 23. We were walking through the Normandy cemetery, and it was quite an emotional feeling ... I helped bury a lot of these guys. As we were going through there, my daughter said to me, "Dad, you know what? I would like to do a film someday about freedom." She was my inspiration.

Q: *How did the project shift to send the message to schools?*

A: I called the associate superintendent of schools in Torrance, Calif. I told him, "John, you have four high schools in Torrance. I would like to take a young history teacher from each one to Belgium for the purpose of doing a documentary about the loss of freedom of the citizens in Belgium, and for the purpose of having DVDs to distribute in high schools to teach kids about the loss of freedom."

He told me, "George, you are talking to a military brat. My father was in the 8th Air Force and is buried at Arlington. Come in and see me." So I did.

He arranged to get the teachers for me. They were fantastic. And they are doing a great job now. They wrote lesson plans and are using the DVDs in their classrooms. That has been very gratifying. My vision is to get them into over 3,000 public and private schools. I am trying to get funding for that.

Q: *How has death, particularly all you saw in World War II, influenced your life?*

A: When I was a little boy, I had the biggest fear of death. Then, when I got drafted, I got put in a graves-registration company. I didn't want anything to do with dead bodies. I wanted to get out of that.

When I landed in Normandy, I was very immature. I weighed 115 pounds, had never been away from home, and couldn't swim. That was my biggest fear, getting off the liberty ship and onto a landing craft. Worrying about drowning. I remember a tanker getting hit and exploding. Bodies in the water. Debris in the water. We went in on a landing craft. Our job was to clear the beaches and pick up the bodies. The whole 11 months, every day from Normandy until the end of the war, our job was picking up bodies, initiating temporary cemeteries – 17 of them – in France, Belgium and Germany. And then when the war was over, we had to disinter a cemetery in Germany ... we had German prisoners digging the graves, and then we had to re-identify the remains of all these bodies. That was a miserable undertaking.

Q: *You have a unique perspective on the price of freedom.*

A: My purpose is to teach people the lessons of what it's like to lose one's freedom. That is the reason I am doing this. When I talk to kids in the classroom, their eyes open wide. I tell them firsthand about people I know – some now dead – people I know who did lose their freedom and did lose members of their families. I tell them, "Just imagine someone breaking in your door tonight and taking your father and your brother and never seeing them again." Yeah. They listen when you talk to them in those terms, about what it's like to lose your freedom.

Q: *What kind of audience response have you received?*

A: Some people tell me they went through a box of tissues watching a film. Nothing is rehearsed. In fact, one of the teachers started to ask me (during the first film) how it felt to be there at the very location where we had 17,000 bodies at one time. Naturally, it got to me. Having been there and done that myself, and then doing a film about it, is really emotional.

Read an extended version of this interview and see a video of George Ciampa at work:
www.legion.org/magazine

Learn more about Ciampa's project:
www.letfreedomringforall.org
george@letfreedomringforall.org

LEGIONNAIRES: THE FIRST GENERATION

James F. O'Neil

Pioneer of Legion Baseball was a soldier, journalist.

A headstrong veteran of World War I and national commander of The American Legion, James O'Neil disappointed his fans in New Hampshire when he rejected their pleas to run for the U.S. Senate in 1948. But he believed the time wasn't right, and knew his support for universal military training, a robust national defense and America's struggle against communism had earned him as many enemies as friends.

O'Neil was always focused on the reality of the times, reaching many decisions based on his analysis of the circumstances. Those around him were often puzzled, but his course usually proved wise. Instead of enrolling at Dartmouth in 1916, he enlisted in the 1st New Hampshire Infantry, correctly predicting that the United States would enter the war in Europe. And before he went overseas, where he would participate in the St. Mihiel offensive and the Battle of Château-Thierry, O'Neil gave up his sergeant's stripes to make room for a man trying to get into officers' candidate school: Frank Knox, publisher of the *Manchester Union and Leader* and future Navy secretary for President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

After the war, O'Neil became a journalist. He took a job at the *Manchester Daily Mirror* in 1923, but it soon folded and Knox's rival paper hired him. The two men became close friends, with Knox acting as O'Neil's confidante and adviser. At Knox's urging, O'Neil founded Henry J. Sweeney Post 2 in Manchester, and together they helped organize the Legion's Department of New Hampshire.

As Navy secretary, Knox blocked O'Neil from serving during World War II, wanting him to run for Congress instead. But after Knox's death in 1944, another friend, John L. Sullivan, became assistant secretary of the Navy. O'Neil became his special assistant, visiting the occupied islands of the southwest Pacific and participating in three major invasions. He later accompanied teams into Japan during the occupation.

Starting in 1929, O'Neil gained national attention as one of the architects of American Legion Baseball. He helped promote the 1930 New England regional tournament and the Eastern sectional tournament in 1931, both played at Manchester, and directed the regional tournament at Lynn, Mass., in 1937. He also served on the National Americanism Commission for 13 years.

Initially opposed to a run for American Legion national commander in 1947, O'Neil – as Manchester's police chief – changed his mind after hearing someone say the Legion "is too big for a cop as its head." He launched a vigorous campaign and other candidates dropped out of the race, gaining him unanimous approval.

O'Neil maintained strong ties to the Legion after his term as commander. In 1950, he was named publisher of *The American Legion Magazine*, where he served until he retired in 1978.

– Paul Fedorchak

The dossier

Born to Joseph and Mary O'Neil in Manchester, N.H., on June 13, 1898.

Volunteered for service on the Mexican border in 1916, and served as an infantryman in France. Received a second lieutenant's commission in 1918.

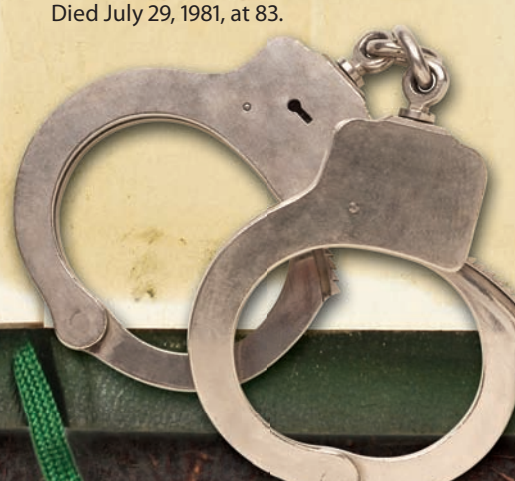
Worked for *Manchester Daily Mirror* as reporter and assistant city editor. Hired by *Manchester Union and Leader* as feature writer and eventually promoted to city editor.

Married Edith Oraf in 1925 and had two sons, Kenneth and James.

Appointed Manchester's deputy chief of police in 1934, and later promoted to police chief.

National commander of The American Legion, 1947-1948.

Died July 29, 1981, at 83.



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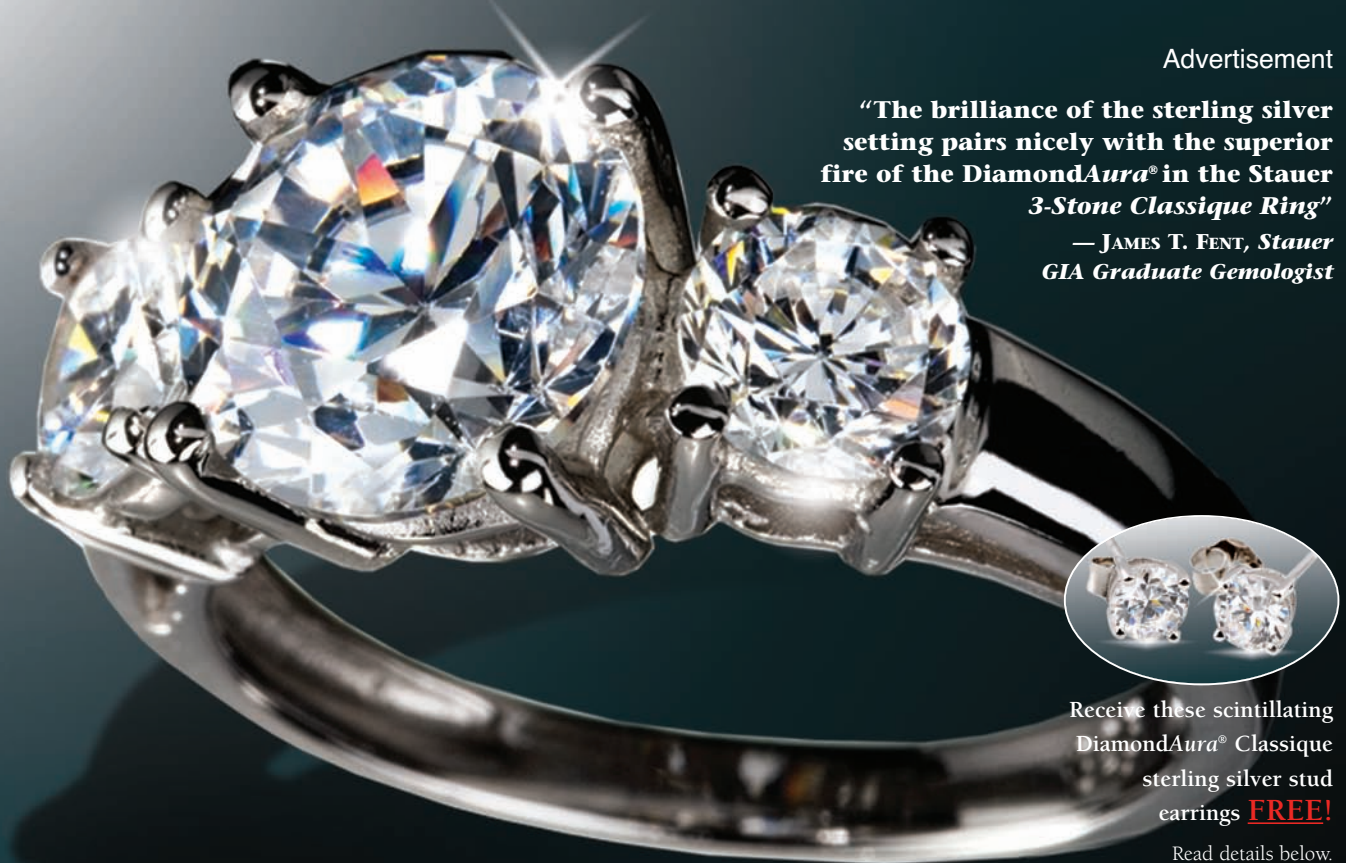

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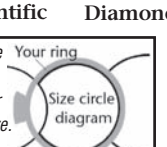

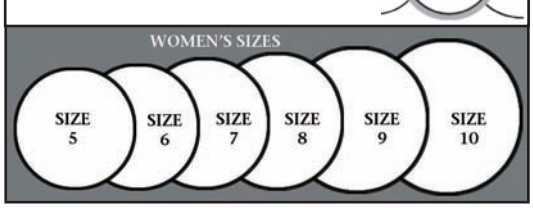

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‘A demand on my soul’

Korean War veteran finds the going tough to see chapel built at veterans cemetery.

BY ALANA BURKE

A Korean War veteran and retired California state lawmaker, K. Maurice Johannessen lives by the proverb, “The man who says it cannot be done should get out of the way of the man who is already doing it.” In the California Senate, his unbridled championship of veterans earned him the nickname “Mojo.”

Today, he still fights on behalf of his fellow veterans. His latest project: construction of a chapel in the Northern California Veterans Cemetery. Such an effort, however, is not proceeding without some controversy. The Mojave Desert cross, the Boy Scouts’ dismissal from Balboa Park in San Diego and the cross at Mount Soledad’s veterans memorial have led to legal challenges that, although unresolved, have had a chilling effect on such efforts as a new chapel in a state veterans cemetery.

Johannessen, a member of The American Legion, is determined to fight for the chapel and get it built if he has to do it himself. He recently spoke with Alana Burke, a radio-talk-show host who has been following his story, for *The American Legion Magazine*.

Q: ***Even in retirement, you continue to work for veterans. What’s your motivation?***

A: I was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1934, and grew up during the Nazi occupation. The Americans and Allies made a big impression on me. After the war, I started to read about the United States – about the big trees in California, the ruggedness and individualism. At 17, I joined the Merchant Marines, and I worked my way, steerage if you will, over to the United States. I landed in San Pedro not speaking any English, with 20 bucks in my pocket.

I joined the Army during the Korean War, and I read everything I could find on American history, the Constitution, and learned the language. One of my most prized possessions is my immigration paper with a photo showing me in my American uniform.

The military was my benefactor, and it was because of my time in the service that I got my citizenship, education, and all the things this country has to offer. The veterans served this nation when we needed them, and this must not be forgotten.

Q: ***You authored, or co-authored, 74 bills for veterans, but the Northern California Veterans Cemetery was especially important to you. Why?***

A: As a senator, I made a conscious decision that the best way I could pay back what I had was by protecting the veterans and making sure that all that was promised to them would come to pass.

I knew there had to be a veterans cemetery in northern California because veterans have the right to anticipate where they will be buried and that their family can come and visit them. The state and federal government had issues with the funding, and I was told that not very many people would come to the cemetery, not very many veterans. I fought it through, and we are at over 2,500 right now at rest in the cemetery.

Q: ***Now you've taken on yet another project, a chapel in the cemetery?***
A: Yes, but the problem is that the government doesn't want anything to do with building chapels, because of the religious connotation.

Q: ***Much like the Mojave Cross, which even now the ACLU wants torn down?***
A: We don't exclude anyone, but this is our heritage. Unfortunately, there are people who don't understand history or what made America so exceptional in the world, and why people like me wanted to come here. When I came here, I made a commitment to be an American. It means something to be an American.

Q: ***And the chapel?***
A: The cemetery needs a chapel so the family can be in remembrance and have their funeral inside, out of the rain and heat. I could not get any funds from the government, but the state finally agreed to lease me a piece of ground so that I can build the chapel myself, and then when it is finished, hand them the key, which I will do.

I can't call it a chapel. It is a veterans memorial building. But this will be a chapel, and it will be nonsectarian because my friends in the military come in all makes, shapes and colors. A congressman told me, "Now, Senator, when you look at the drawings of the building, it looks like a cross from the air."

And I said, "You kidding me? I never thought about that!"

Q: ***What about the terms you have agreed to with the state? Not very many people would agree to fund it, build it and then hand it over.***
A: It was the only way to get the chapel for the veterans. I give the military all the accolades for teaching me to be an American. It is a demand on my soul to do this. I am paying back a debt of gratitude, and I intend never to quit. There will be support for the veterans.

Alana Burke is a columnist and radio-talk-show host in northern California. She can be contacted via e-mail at ***alana@alanaburke.com.*** *The Web site for her program is* ***www.alanaburke.com.***

Find out more about the chapel project:
www.calvetassistancegroup.com
kmj@calvetassistancegroup.com

[VERBATIM]

"I think we're going to shock the heck out of everybody."

Vice President Joe Biden, saying he's not worried about the Democratic Party suffering big losses in November's midterm elections

"The mass graves that used to be for burying Saddam's soldiers have now been prepared again for U.S. soldiers."

Gen. Hossein Kan'ani Moghadam, deputy commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, warning against a military strike on the country's nuclear facilities

"There's no truth to the rumor that I've added an inflatable exit to my office."

Robert Gibbs, White House press secretary, referencing Steven Slater, the JetBlue flight attendant who quit his job by exiting on a plane's inflatable emergency chute

"You're looking at what people have not seen in 156 years, which is a remarkably intact British sailing vessel."

Jim Prentice, Canada's environmental minister, on the discovery of HMS *Investigator*, which was abandoned by its crew while on a rescue mission in the Arctic in 1853

"The history of this country was made largely by people who wanted to be left alone. Those who could not thrive when left to themselves never felt at ease in America."

Eric Hoffer, "Reflections on the Human Condition" (1973)

"Putting Mecca time in the face of Greenwich Mean Time. This is the goal."

Mohammed al-Arkubi, manager of a Saudi Arabian hotel, on the Royal Mecca Clock Tower, which has a planned height of nearly 2,000 feet

Sources: ABC, *Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, Twitter, BBC

[MEMORIAM]

A 'MOST IMPORTANT ALASKAN'

Best known for his lengthy Senate career, Ted Stevens was a decorated World War II pilot and active Legionnaire.

Though he built a reputation on his feisty style and staunch commitment to Alaska, former Sen. Ted Stevens was a stalwart supporter of the U.S. military, the veterans community and The American Legion. As President Obama observed, Stevens "devoted his career to serving the people of Alaska and fighting for our men and women in uniform."

AP

Killed in a plane crash in his home state Aug. 9, Stevens was 86.

The longest-serving Republican senator in history, Stevens was a decorated World War II hero, flying with the 14th Air Force – the famed "Flying Tigers" that operated in China during the war. Stevens earned five medals for his service, including two Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Air Medals and a medal from the Republic of China.

Like many of his fellow Legionnaires, Stevens went to college on the GI Bill, earning his undergraduate degree from UCLA in 1947 and his law degree from Harvard in 1950.

After law school, Stevens served as the U.S. attorney in Fairbanks, Alaska, before holding a number of posts in the Department of the Interior, where he advocated for Alaska's statehood.

In an interview with *The Washington Post*, historian Stephen Haycox described Stevens as "the most important Alaskan in shaping modern Alaska." In fact, Stevens was named Alaskan of the Century in 1999. *The Anchorage Daily News* described Stevens as a "giant" and a "legend."

Among his most noteworthy achievements, Stevens laid the groundwork for legislation authorizing the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.

Throughout his public life, Stevens was active in The American Legion, serving as the Department of Alaska's Americanism and Foreign Relations chairman. A member of Post 1 in Anchorage, Stevens had 50 continuous years of membership, served on the advisory board of the National Law and Order Committee, and was vice chairman of the National Distinguished Guests Committee.

Losing a re-election bid in 2008 after being convicted on corruption charges, Stevens won a measure of vindication in 2009, when Attorney General Eric Holder requested that the case be thrown out after it was discovered that federal prosecutors had withheld evidence that might have exonerated Stevens.

"In nearly 25 years on the bench," said Judge Emmet Sullivan, "I've never seen anything approaching the mishandling and misconduct that I've seen in this case."

After being cleared, Stevens said, "I always knew that there would be a day when the cloud that surrounded me would be removed. That day has finally come."

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[SHOOTING SPORTS]

Sean Crosier

Rhode Island teen wins Precision crown

Catherine Green of Coventry, R.I., captured the Precision crown during the 20th American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championship in Colorado Springs, Colo., on Aug. 7. Shooting for the Newport Junior Rifle Team and sponsored by Portsmouth Post 18, Green finished with a score of 2,460.3 out of a possible 2,509.

Hannah Black of Yorktown, Va., won the Sporter championship. Shooting for the Lafayette Gun Club and sponsored by Holloway-Moore Post 273 in Poquoson, Va., Black fired 2,312 out of 2,509. Her score placed her second among the all-time top Sporter scores.

Both champions received $2,500 college scholarships from Sons of The American Legion.

Tournament staff selected Shane Russell of Mendon, Mich., to receive the Francis M. Redington Sportsmanship Award for best exemplifying good sportsmanship and fair play. He is a member of the St. Joseph County 4-H Straight Shooters and is sponsored by Hice-Shutes Post 170 in Three Rivers, Mich.

This year's championship was the last for Jack and Marlene Duncan, who have been volunteers since the program began in 1990. After 40 years of coaching youth and helping oversee various shooting-sports activities, Marlene – a California air rifle and pistol champion – plans to spend more time at her own shooting range.

"The Junior Air Rifle National Championship has a special spot in my heart," she said. "I have been here 20 years, calling the line and working with the kids. And it has been a fantastic honor to work with the Legion. It's one of the better programs we have within the shooting community."

TOP FINISHERS *PRECISION*
1. **Catherine Green,** Coventry, R.I., 2,460.3
2. **Matthew Martin,** Eagle River, Alaska, 2,453.0
3. **Danielle Foster,** Newport News, Va., 2,446.9
4. **Magdalena Mica,** Clearwater, Fla., 2,446.5
5. **Bryan Zavala,** Lytle, Texas, 2,436.9

TOP FINISHERS *SPORTER*
1. **Hannah Black,** Yorktown, Va., 2,312
2. **Yvonne Swiontek,** Beach Park, Ill., 2,302.8
3. **Hunter Firebaugh,** Albuquerque, N.M., 2,264
4. **James South,** Luka, Miss., 2,253.6
5. **Ryan Holcombe,** Rayville, La., 2,251.4

Stay informed with new phone app

The new mobile-phone application offers streamlined news, Twitter updates and other information for Legionnaires on the go.

BlackBerry (and other mobile phone) users can enter ***mobile.legion.org*** into the browsers on their phones, and they will be automatically directed to an easy-to-read mobile-phone version of The American Legion National Headquarters Web site.

iPhone users can download the free American Legion application from the Apple App Store, accessible from any iPhone.

[AMERICANISM]

Boys Nation elects 2010 leaders

Charlie Brown, 17, of Avon Park, Fla., was elected president of American Legion Boys Nation at Marymount University in Arlington, Va., July 27. An incoming senior at Avon Park High School, Brown plans to attend the Naval Academy or Harvard University to study history and political science.

"I'm grateful and honored that the senators put their faith in me and elected me," Brown said.

Alex Geiger, 17, of North Little Rock, Ark., was elected vice president. An incoming senior at Episcopal Collegiate School, he plans to attend Morehouse College and become a pastor.

Boys Nation President Charlie Brown, left, and Vice President Alex Geiger Charlie Tucker

"I'd like to thank my mom and grandmother for raising me to effectively be an upstanding young man," Geiger said. "I also want to thank my pastor and my uncle, who is currently serving in Iraq. I'm so thankful to have this opportunity."

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[MEMORIALS]

'A FITTING TRIBUTE'

At last, a national memorial will honor America's disabled veterans.

A two-acre site next to the National Mall in Washington has been chosen for the future American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, authorized by Congress in 2000. The first national memorial of its kind, it will honor the more than 3 million living veterans permanently disabled while serving in the U.S. military, including 53,000 in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

"More than 95 percent of the funds needed for groundbreaking have been raised so far, so we're very close to our goal," says Michael Corbett, veterans fundraising coordinator for the memorial and member of American Legion Post 164 in Boynton Beach, Fla.

"The entire amount required to build and maintain the memorial needs to be raised in order to break ground, so it is estimated that groundbreaking will occur in the spring of 2011. However, we are hopeful groundbreaking can occur before the end of the year if concerned Americans step up to the plate."

Designed by Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Ltd., the marble-and-glass monument will include a star-shaped reflecting pool, its surface broken only by an eternal flame. A grove of trees will stand beside the pool.

Illustration by Michael McCann, courtesy Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation, Inc.

The American Legion passed a resolution of support for the memorial in 2009, calling it "a fitting tribute to the brave men and women who sustained severe injuries and lifelong disabilities in the course of defending the United States."

Other veterans service organizations supporting the project include Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the Blinded Veterans Association.

Actor Gary Sinise, national spokesman for the memorial, said he hopes that his participation "will help draw attention to the cause and ensure its successful fruition as the nation's first and only such tribute, built specifically to these courageous men and women."

– Philip M. Callaghan

To read more about the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, or to donate:

www.avdlm.org

[IMMIGRATION]

Baby steps

"Baby tourism," traveling to the United States just to deliver a baby, is not only a controversial political topic. It's also a lucrative business. According to *ABC News*, an upscale hotel in Manhattan "markets birth-tourism packages to pregnant women abroad, luring more than a dozen expectant guests and their families to the United States last year."

For $7,750, the expectant mother receives a full month in a one-bedroom suite, airport transfer, baby cradle and a "gift set," ABC reports. Some packages cost up to $45,000.

Stories like this are fueling a debate over birthright citizenship and spurring some in Congress to re-examine the 14th Amendment.

[EDUCATION]

GI Bill benefits transferable by request

Q: ***I am currently on active duty and will be retiring in December. I have a son who is 16 and a daughter who is 14. How do I transfer my benefits to them? And since I am not sure what institution(s) they will attend, is it possible to transfer my benefits after I am discharged?***

A: Since you are still in the military, use the Transfer of Education Benefits (TEB) Web site to designate, modify and revoke a Transfer of Entitlement (TOE) request. After leaving the military, you may provide a future effective date for use of the TOE, modify the number of months transferred, or revoke entitlement transferred by submitting a written request to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

After separating from the military, you cannot designate new dependents to receive transferred entitlement, or amend the effective date of the initial transfer of entitlement to an earlier date.

Valerie Vigil, a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Arizona, is a past vice president of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators. Send GI Bill questions to her by e-mail. ***askvalerie@legion.org***

[ECONOMICS]

Can I get a loan?

Loans advertised for startup companies mean different things to different people. The average vetrepreneur understands startup to mean a business he or she is getting ready to launch, but the SBA and banks can define a startup company as one that has operated for five or fewer years.

Business loans are extremely competitive and difficult to qualify for, and pre-venture money is even scarcer. If you are in that stage, the lender is going to look at your personal creditworthiness, your current financial stability, the reasonableness of your business plan and the amount you are investing.

Almost always, you'll be required to personally guarantee the note and, depending on your credit, may or may not need SBA backing.

As a veteran, you and your spouse have access to the Patriot Express (PX) loan from SBA, which has the most favorable terms in the industry. However, any loan that needs SBA backing is always going to be more expensive than a loan that can stand on its own. Lenders can only use an SBA guarantee in the event that the business would not qualify for a loan on its own but is close. In these cases, the PX can guarantee up to 85 percent of the outstanding balance and will go up to $500,000. But again, these loans come with a cost as much as 4.75 percent above prime, which right now is around 3.25 percent. With an SBA loan, you could be looking at as much as 8 percent plus fees.

A lot goes into determining whether your business is right for a small-business loan or not, and we will be happy to work with you.

Louis J. Celli Jr. is CEO of the Veterans Business Resource Center. Readers can send questions for "On Point" to ***lcelli@nevbrc.org****.*

[EDUCATION]

Legacy Scholarship recipient Tokyo-bound

Aware of the skyrocketing costs of higher education, The American Legion established the Legacy Scholarship Fund to help children who lost a parent on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

To date, nearly $3 million has been contributed to the Legacy Fund, toward a goal of $20 million that would continuously provide college funds for children of fallen U.S. servicemembers. Among the fund's biggest supporters are the Legion Riders, whose annual Legacy Run has been raising money for the scholarship fund since 2006.

Brandon Laureta of Troutdale, Ore., recently spoke to *The American Legion Magazine* about being a 2010 Legacy Scholarship recipient.

Q: *How did you hear about The American Legion Legacy Scholarship?*

A: I heard about the Legacy Scholarship from American Widow Project and applied, as I'm preparing to attend Temple University in Philadelphia this fall. This scholarship is in honor of my father, Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Brad Lindsey. He lost his life while serving his country in Afghanistan in 2006.

Q: *How did you feel when you learned you were one of this year's recipients?*

A: Finding out I would be receiving the Legacy scholarship filled me with overwhelming joy and relief. (It) lifts the financial burden off my shoulders and allows me to focus on my schoolwork. The scholarship is also enabling me to achieve my dream of attending college to become a radio broadcaster, and to study in a foreign country. My father always taught me to aim high, so that's why I applied to Temple University, which has a campus in Tokyo.

Q: *What enticed you to study abroad?*

A: My father was in the Navy prior to joining the National Guard and would talk about other cultures and the way they lived. This instilled a curiosity in me to see other parts of the world.

Q: *What do you remember most about your father?*

A: What I remember most was his compassion for other cultures. After every deployment, he would come home and talk about sharing meals with the civilians who weren't involved with the country's conflict. He always wanted to show the civilians that U.S. soldiers were there to keep the peace and meant no harm to them.

Q: *What are your thoughts on the Legacy Scholarship and its purpose?*

A: The loss of a parent has an incredible impact on a family, both financially and emotionally. The American Legion makes it possible for unfortunate families to continue to educate the children of a fallen soldier. I am honored to receive the scholarship and hope to be able to give back to the organization once my education is complete.

www.legion.org/riders/scholarship
www.legion.org/riders/legacy

[LEGION RACING]

Johnson signs Community Covenant

Jerick Johnson, driver of the American Legion/David Law Firm 76 Freedom Car, finished 26th in the Weis Markets 125 ARCA race at Pocono Raceway on July 31. The 50-lap, 125-mile race was the 11th event in the RE/MAX and Menards ARCA Racing Series. He qualified 30th, placing him outside the 15th row on the starting grid.

In mid-August, Johnson ranked 17th in points. He's also vying for Hard Charger and Rookie of the Year honors.

Before the race, Johnson participated in a Community Covenant signing in Lewisburg, Pa., where Mayor Judy Wagner, representatives of the Pennsylvania National Guard, Legionnaires and American Legion Riders proclaimed their mutual support for local military families.

[MEMBERSHIP]

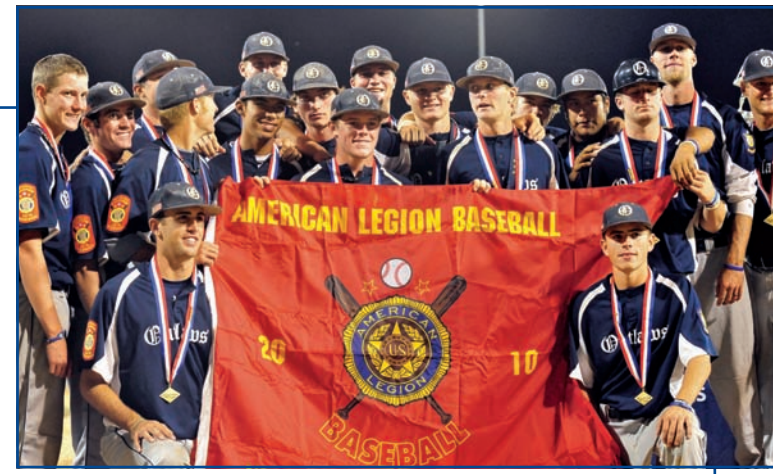
Steady in tough times

American Legion membership through the Great Depression:

1929	794,219
1930	887,754
1931	1,053,909
1932	931,373
1933	769,551
1934	831,681
1935	842,855
1936	956,273
1937	973,841
1938	974,637
1939	1,032,989
1940	1,078,119
1941	1,107,075
1942	1,136,148

[AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL]

Oklahoma Outlaws win Legion World Series



Becky Burch

The Midwest City, Okla., Outlaws of Post 170 defeated Eden Prairie, Minn., 11-6 and 10-1 in a doubleheader to capture The American Legion Baseball World Series championship at Avista Stadium in Spokane, Wash., on Aug. 17.

During Game 14, Midwest City's Josh Halbert jump-started the Outlaw offense by stealing home to cap a three-run second inning that broke a 1-1 tie in the opener. He then delivered in the seventh inning with a three-run homer to seal the win over Eden Prairie, which had gone undefeated in the tournament.

Batting first in Game 15, Midwest City rallied in the opening inning with a two-run home run from Greg Nelson. Heading into the sixth inning, Midwest City led 5-0 and advanced three more runs as Nelson stole home, while two RBIs were notched by Larry Head and Halbert.

The seventh inning brought three straight outs for Midwest City, but Eden Prairie got on the scoreboard with an RBI from David Belusky. However, that was Eden Prairie's one and only run.

The Outlaws got a lights-out performance from closer Dalton Bernardi, who threw three straight strikeouts to put the finishing touches on a 10-1 victory and the 2010 American Legion World Series title.

"Winning the Legion World Series has been on my bucket list," Midwest City manager Doug Weese said. "We lost our top player, J.T. Realmuto, the last day of regionals when he signed a contract with the Florida Marlins. But those kids said, 'We're still going to win, Coach.' And they did. I couldn't be more proud of them."

Midwest City stole 13 bases, including home four times, setting a record. The team's sweep was the first time since a Legion World Series final in 1985 that a team out of the loser's bracket won two games on the championship day.

Before the championship games, Midwest City (66-10) was second in batting average (.382) and second in defense (.964 fielding percentage). Eden Prairie (39-9) was third in batting average (.346) and first in defense (.980 fielding percentage).

"We pride ourselves on defense, and we didn't have it today," Eden Prairie manager Scott Hackett said. "They executed, and we didn't."

But Eden Prairie did capitalize on defense the first time it played Midwest City on Day 2 of the tournament, defending the lead for nine innings to take a 9-6 win.

Eden Prairie shortstop Blake Schmit won the 2010 James Daniel Jr. Sportsmanship Award. He batted .431, and had 22 hits and 12 RBIs. The MVP award went to Midwest City right fielder Dalton Bernardi, who ended with a .420 batting average on 21 hits and 15 RBIs.

All 15 games of the Legion World Series aired live on the Legion's Web site. The number of online viewers soared, quintupling that of 2009. By the end of Game 15, the Legion World Series had more than 104,000 unique viewers worldwide and more than 3 million play minutes watched.

– Cameran Erny

[TROOP SUPPORT]

New Legion reps help troops in transition

The American Legion has expanded its outreach to military personnel in transition with new offices at Madigan Army Medical Center near Tacoma, Wash., and Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio.

Jon Dickson, a former Army combat medic, will assist active-duty troops at Fort Sam Houston and Randolph Air Force Base. Working out of Madigan, Navy veteran Brian Buckler will serve Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base. Their title is "physical and medical examination board representative," or PEB rep, but Buckler's and Dickson's work includes handling just about any problem or concern a servicemember might have during transition.

Injured in Iraq while deployed with the Army's 1st Cavalry Division and medically retired in June, Dickson has firsthand experience with the process and the San Antonio military community alike. "I was one of these soldiers myself," he said. "The process can be very confusing."

One of the primary jobs of a PEB rep is to make sure a servicemember's medical record is complete, and that all conditions are accurately documented and transferred from active-duty to veteran status.

Jon Dickson and Brian Buckler

"We don't want him or her to have to fight over medical records to get VA benefits," Dickson says.

How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206,** fax **(317) 630-1280,** e-mail **reunions@legion.org** or submit information via our Web site, **www.legion.org/veterans/reunions.**

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, *The American Legion Magazine* will publish a group's listing only once a year.** Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206,** fax **(317) 630-1280** or e-mail **reunions@legion.org.**

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life memberships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership.** Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.** Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

351st Bomb Grp (England, WWII), Savannah, GA, 11/8-8, Bruce Nocera, (718) 721-0924, bnocera@nyc.rr.com; **444th FIS,** Charleston, SC, 4/9-12, Gerald Coughenour, (803) 740-4976, gcougie@sc.rr.com; **AFSPPF & 8th Recon Tech Grp, 6594th Test Sqdn, 7405th & 7499th Support Grps,** Savannah, GA, 10/11-15, Dick Temple, (703) 786-4743, dicktemple@aol.com; **Super Sabre Society,** Las Vegas, 4/12-15, Les Frazier, (512) 930-3066, supersabresociety@suddenlink.net

ARMY

33rd Inf Rgt Cbt Team (Panama Canal), Clarksville, IN, 10/24-28, Frank Ryan, (516) 541-3891, dolphindriver98@yahoo.com; **91st Chem Mortar Bn,** Columbus, GA, 9/30-10/1, James McCabe, (770) 487-8392; **99th Sig Bn Opns A Co Construction,** Fort Hancock, NJ, 11/13-13, Ken Zebrowski, (732) 259-9589, zee326@aol.com; **164th Cbt Eng (WWII),** Grantville, PA, 10/11-13, Ralph Sanchez, (570) 743-1060, sanchlove@aol.com; **815th Eng Bn,** Fort Leonard Wood, MO, 5/12-13, Larry Saul, (706) 201-6001, 815thengr@gmail.com

JOINT

Distinguished Flying Cross Society, Riverside, CA, 10/24-27, John Appel, johneappel@yahoo.com

MARINES

Beirut Vets (1958-2010), Jacksonville, NC, 10/21-23, Danny Joy, (910) 353-5942, usmcjoy@yahoo.com; **Foxtrot 2/1 Nui Loc Son (Jan-Apr 1967),** Virginia Beach, VA, 4/21-23, Mike Snyder, (757) 652-7303, skcs1989@yahoo.com

NAVY

***Balduck* APD 132,** Black River Falls, WI, 10/27-28, William Pollard, (952) 472-5153, bill3pollard@mchsi.com; **Carolinas LST Assn,** Myrtle Beach, SC, 5/2-4, Calhoun Benton, (843) 902-7445, ccbenton@directv.net; ***Chewaucan* AOG 50,** Jacksonville, FL, 10/7-10, Pierce Pelouze, (856) 566-2495, ppelouze@comcast.net; ***Compton* DD 705,** McLean, VA, 4/29-5/2, Jack Heidecker, (570) 450-5545, jack555@ptd.net; ***Fort Mandan* LSD 21,** San Diego, 5/11-15, John Theriac, (619) 820-9823, jtheriac@cox.net; **Lithographer Assn,** Dayton, OH, 10/19-24, John Belrose, navylithographers1@verizon.net; **NAS Chase Field,** Beeville, TX, 4/1-3, Mark Webb, (562) 338-5088, mwebb@naschasefield.com; ***Pawcatuck* AO 108,** Chattanooga, TN, 5/9-12, David Willis, (623) 214-9835, dwshs53@aol.com; ***Power* DD 839,** Worcester, MA, 6/25-29, John Pinto, (352) 527-2352, loosecannon839@yahoo.com; ***Robert E. Lee* SSN/SSBN 601,** Newport News, VA, 4/29-5/1, Joe White, (405) 410-9206, joewi@sbcglobal.net; ***San Marcos* LSD 25,** San Diego, 4/29-5/1, Jack Lieberman, (215) 287-4311, jacklieberman8104@comcast.net; ***San Pablo* AVP/AGS 30,** Branson, MO, 4/28-5/2, Stuart Norris, (585) 223-2713, stuenorms@msn.com; ***Smalley* DD 565 (WWII & Korea),** Newport News, VA, 5/11-15, George Bauersfeld, (914) 736-6377, dd565@optonline.com; ***Soley* DD 707 (1944-1970),** Nashville, TN, 5/12-16, Harland Hamm, (701) 540-1178, lthamm@yahoo.com

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Post 58, AZ: William Barnett, John Beischel, Kenneth Bissell, Robert Breniser, Joseph Dandreaux, Lloyd Drennen, John Erben, Daniel Foster, Ralph George, Phillip Gibbons, Rorbert Hooker, Harold Krauss, Herman Laufer, Ernest Marshall, Alex Nichepor, Betty Nichepor, Walter O'Neill, Orie Spegal, Ralph Truax, Theodore Trulson, Richard Vandenberg, Louis Vogeli, Otto Weeber, Lawrence Wyma
Post 102, CA: Andrew Ballantyne, Carl R. Nicolson, Hugo S. Scotto
Post 130, CA: William Kuflik, Jay C. Stovall, Leroy A. Taylor
Post 24, FL: Warner Weil
Post 141, FL: Roland F. Hoyle, Jerry L. Hollida, Donald T. Keller, William E. McIntyre, Charles E. Moore, David F. Pleasanton, Kenneth L. Powell Sr., Joseph A. Thibault
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Post 282, NJ: Edwin G. Marshman
Post 294, NJ: Herbert Angell, John W. Clark, Robert Ford, Harold Krause, Don McGarrity, Bob Steelman
Post 325, NJ: Edgar C. Caffyn

IN SEARCH OF

1st Recruit Bn Plt 1065 (Parris Island, SC, 1969), Johnny Wheeler, (850) 637-3918, corsaira7e@aol.com
2nd Mobile Aerial Port Sqdn (Little Rock, AR), Joe Calvert, (618) 928-1032, joecalvert1@yahoo.com
11th Ord Co DAS (Fort Devens, MA, 1954-1960), Bob Jakubiak, (920) 458-4704, keljak@aol.com
25th Inf Div B Co 3rd Bde (South Vietnam, 1966-1967), John Daughenbaugh, (970) 879-1820, rockingc@zirkel.us
82nd Aerodrome Sqdn (WWII), William Davis, (585) 307-4944
317th Eng Bn (Camp Eschborn, Germany, Desert Storm & Fort Benning, GA, 1988-1993), John Elder, (620) 290-1080, lexicob@sbcglobal.net
595th Sig Co Support (Panzer Kasserne, Germany, 1955-1957), Cleve Marshall, (210) 826-3952, williamcthorman@yahoo.com
832nd Sig Bn (Somerville House, Brisbane, Australia, 1943-1944), Edward Plumley, (864) 859-0800
AF Supply Personnel (Bordeaux, France, 1959-1961), Jim Caldwell, (864) 978-4324, jwcsr@bellsouth.net
Basic Tng Flts 219 & 220 (Lackland AFB, 1954), Steve Finley, (815) 623-7329, sfaste@aol.com
Counter Mortar Radar Plt (Camp Pendleton, CA & Vietnam, 1968-1972), Robert Davids, (304) 947-5234, rjdavids@frontiernet.net
***Diamond Head* AE 19 (Far East Cruise, 1967),** Mike Foster, (207) 375-8111
Plt 310 Q Co (Parris Island, SC, 1958), Ant Street, levanstreet@yahoo.com
Plt 393 (Parris Island, SC, 1968), ITR H Co (Camp Lejeune, NC, 1968), Staging Bn (Camp Pendleton, CA, 1968-1969), Vietnamese Language School (1969), 9th MAB Reception Ctr Trp Handler (Camp Hansen, Okinawa, 1969-1970), Vernon Lane, (843) 238-2498
USS LSMR/LFR 515 96th Co (Great Lakes, IL, 1945-1970), Joseph Gray, (520) 682-3418, joegrayseausar@msn.com
USS *Marmora* IX 189 (1944-1945), Kenneth Ziese, (219) 663-2625, jtz@ziese.net
VP-661 (Norfolk, VA, 1951-1953), Allen Siemers, (715) 822-8410, plsiemers@centurytel.net
VS-62 (Key West, FL, WWII), Lonas Kralik, (951) 679-3911, mslonas@verizon.net

TAPS

Miguel A. Blanco, Dept. of Puerto Rico. Dept. Cmdr. 1991-1993, Nat'l Cmdr.'s Rep. to Nat'l Cemetery Cmte. 1999-2000, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1986-1988 and 1998-1999, and Nat'l & Homeland Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1993-1997.
Paul A. Dahlberg, Dept. of Kansas. Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1976-1979.
Paul E. Gilbertson, Dept. of Oregon. Nat'l Citizens Flag Alliance 2001-2002, Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1985-1995 and 1996-2000, and Nat'l Counter-Subversive Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1973-1979.
Henry N. Macoy, Dept. of Mississippi. Dept. Cmdr. 1983-1984, Nat'l Law & Order Cmte. Memb. 1962-1968, Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1968-1969, 1978-1983 and 1989-1991, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 1984-1986, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1984-1986.
Roland D. Marble, Dept. of Mississippi. Dept. Cmdr. 1965-1966, Nat'l Vice Cmdr. 1969-1970 and Nat'l American Legion Endowment Fund Corp. Memb. 1971-1980.
Joe L. Matthews, Dept. of Texas. Nat'l Cmdr. 1972-1973, Dept. Cmdr. 1956-1957, Nat'l Mbrshp. & Post Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1955-1956, 1957-1958 and 1964-1965, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 1958-1962, Nat'l Sec. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. for Civil Defense Cmte. Chmn. 1961-1962, Nat'l Resolutions Subcommittee Memb. 1959-1961, Nat'l Sec. Training Cmte. Memb. 1952-1958, Nat'l Sec. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1958-1961, Nat'l & Homeland Sec. Vice Chmn. 1966-1967, Nat'l Cmdr.'s Rep. to Nat'l Aeronautics & Space Cmte. 1967-1968, Nat'l Internal Affairs Cmsn. Memb. 1969-1972, Nat'l Advisory Cmte. to the Nat'l Cmdr. Memb. 1971-1972 and 1976-1999, Nat'l Finance Cmsn. Ex-Officio Memb. 1972-1973, Nat'l Overseas Graves Decoration Trust Chmn. 1972-1973, Nat'l Overseas Graves Decoration Trust Vice Chmn. 1973-1974, Nat'l Overseas Graves Decoration Trust Memb. 1974-1975, Nat'l Advisory Cmte. to the Nat'l Cmdr. Chmn. 1973-1974, Nat'l Advisory Cmte. to the Nat'l Cmdr. Vice Chmn. 1974-1975, Nat'l Legis. Cncl. Memb. 1975-1978, 1981 and 1985-1994, Nat'l American Legion Endowment Fund Corp. Director 1985-2007 and Nat'l American Legion Endowment Fund Corp. Director Emeritus 2006-2010.
A. Darrel Merry, Dept. of Nebraska. Dept. Cmdr. 1978-1979 and Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1981-1983.
Joseph Saia, Dept. of New York. Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1973-1975, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cmsn. Memb. 1975-1976, Nat'l & Homeland Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1976-1990 and Nat'l Military Affairs Cmte. Memb. 1990-2010.
Clyde I. Siler, Dept. of Virginia. Dept. Cmdr. 1992-1993, Nat'l & Homeland Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1997-1998 and Nat'l Cemetery Cmte. Memb. 1998-2010.
Benjamin F. "Ben" Talford, Dept. of New Hampshire. Dept. Cmdr. 1992-1993, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 1995-2003, Nat'l Homeland Sec. & Civil Preparedness Cmte. Memb. 2002-2003, Nat'l & Homeland Sec. Vice Chmn. 1993-2002, Nat'l Econ. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 2003-2004, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 2003-2007, Nat'l Finance Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 2004-2007 and Nat'l Veterans Affairs & Rehab. Cmsn. Memb. 2007-2010.
Allen Thomas, Dept. of South Carolina. Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Memb. 1956-1957 and Nat'l Mbrshp. & Post Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1957-1959.

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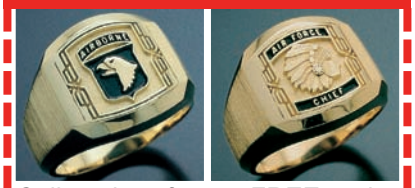

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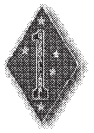

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A COUPLE OF AUNTS used to come up to me at weddings, poking me in the ribs and cackling, "You're next!"

They stopped after I started doing the same to them at funerals.

A MAN NAMED JOE found himself in dire straits. His business had gone bust, and he was having severe financial difficulties. He decided to seek divine intervention.

"God," he prayed, "please help me. I've lost my business, and if I don't get some money, I'll lose my house as well. Please let me win the lottery." But lottery night came, and someone else won.

"God," Joe prayed again, "please let me win the lottery! I've lost my business and my house, and soon I'll lose my car." Still no luck.

One more time, he prayed. "God, why have you forsaken me? I've lost everything. My wife and children are starving. I don't often ask you for help, and I have always been a good servant to you. Please let me win the lottery, just this once, so I can get my life back in order!"

Suddenly, with a blinding flash of light, the heavens opened, and Joe heard the voice of God.

"Joe, meet me halfway on this. Buy a ticket."

IF LAWYERS are disbarred and clergymen defrocked, doesn't it then follow that electricians can be delighted, musicians denoted, cowboys deranged, models deposed, tree surgeons debarked and dry cleaners depressed?

"Actually, Mom, it's more like three triangular meals a day."

"He's the chronic pain I was telling you about."

"Gesundheit!"

A MAN wanted a boat more than anything. His wife kept saying no, but he bought one anyway.

"I'll tell you what," he told her. "In the spirit of compromise, why don't you name the boat?" Being a good sport, she accepted.

When her husband went to the dock for the boat's maiden voyage, he saw painted on the side, "For Sale."

"WHEN I WAS A KID," the old man said, "my mother could send me to the store, and I'd get a salami, two pints of milk, six oranges, two loaves of bread, a magazine and a pair of blue jeans, all for a dollar!" He continued, "You can't do that anymore. They've got those darn video cameras everywhere you look."

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